

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1399713



BX
5133
N37
G6



The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

10 tests . avg

WORKS BY

The REV. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A.,

Canon and Chancellor of St. Paul's Cathedral.

RELIGION. Crown 8vo. 5s. (*The Oxford Library of Practical Theology.*)

THE CHURCH CATECHISM THE CHRISTIAN'S MANUAL. Crown 8vo. 5s. (*The Oxford Library of Practical Theology.*)

PENITENCE AND PEACE: being Addresses on the 51st and 23rd Psalms. Crown 8vo. 2s. net.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Being Ten Addresses bearing on the Spiritual Life. Crown 8vo. 2s. net.

APOSTLES OF THE LORD: being Six Lectures on Pastoral Theology. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

SPECULUM SACERDOTUM; or, the Divine Model of the Priestly Life. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d.

PRIESTLY IDEALS; being a Course of Practical Lectures delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral to "Our Society" and other Clergy, in Lent, 1898. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

PRIESTLY BLEMISHES; or, Some Secret Hindrances to the Realisation of Priestly Ideals. A Sequel. Being a Second Course of Practical Lectures delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral to "Our Society" and other Clergy, in Lent, 1902. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d.

WORDS OF EXHORTATION. Sermons preached at St. Paul's and elsewhere. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

Longmans' Pocket Library of Theology.

Price per Volume, 2s. net in Cloth; 3s. net in Leather.

THE REV. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A.

The Gospel Message.

THE REV. H. PARRY LIDDON, D.D.

Sermons at St. Paul's and Elsewhere.

Selected from his published volumes by the Rev. H. N.
BATE, M.A.

THE REV. H. R. GAMBLE, M.A.

Christianity and Common Life.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

“Necessity is laid upon me ; yea, woe is unto me,
if I preach not the gospel ! ”

37
56

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

SERMONS PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S
CATHEDRAL

BY THE REV.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A.

CANON AND CHANCELLOR



ST. PAUL'S CROSS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1907

All rights reserved

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

California

TO
THE MEMBERS
OF THE
AMEN COURT GUILD AND S. PAUL'S
LECTURE SOCIETY
IN THE BOND OF AN EARNEST LOVE FOR THE
GREAT CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF S. PAUL
OUR COMMON HOME.

PREFACE

THE sermons collected in this volume have all been preached in S. Paul's, and will correspond, it is hoped, to the title under which they are presented to the Reader ; inasmuch as they are designed to deliver a message of good news, based on the Christian Faith, rather than initiate a discussion, or contribute to the general stock of moral advice.

It is hoped that with all their shortcomings they may be kindly received, as from one who knows the importance of his Message, and how easy it is to mar and distort it, by

defective utterance, or failure to realize the full bearings of that which he wishes to impart.

W. C. E. NEWBOLT.

3, AMEN COURT,

July 30th, 1907.

CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. GOD'S MESSENGER | I |
| II. THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE | 18 |
| III. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN | 34 |
| IV. THE LAMB OF GOD | 51 |
| V. A REPEATED EFFORT <i>Officiously</i> | 68 |
| VI. SERMONS | 84 |
| VII. FAITH AND LIFE | 104 |
| VIII. THE BELIEF IN GOD THE FATHER | 120 |
| IX. THE BELIEF IN GOD THE SAVIOUR | 136 |
| X. THE BELIEF IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST | 151 |
| XI. <u>HEALTH</u> | 167 |

Persevere

“ Ut veritas poteat, placeat moveat.”

I

GOD'S MESSENGER

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”—ST. LUKE iii. 1, 2.

THIS surely is one of the most ironical passages in Holy Scripture, setting forth, as it does, the insignificance of the important, and the importance of the unknown. St. Luke, with his historian instincts and wonderful accuracy, sketches in those names and offices which might be supposed to affect directly or indirectly the events which he is about to describe; and yet not one of them lies in the direct path of the progress of God's wonderful deliverance. Here is the Emperor of the World, as he would style himself, with his power of gazing into the hidden things of fate, through augury and sacrifice: by whose will and permission religious

aspirations were regulated, and new devotions licensed. Here was Pontius Pilate, with a stern eye turned towards any possible fanaticism, or Jewish superstition, who at least kept a firm grip on anything which might possibly develop political complications. There were Herods here and Herods there, and governors thrown out like some poisonous fungus from the tree of Government, on which they battered. There were high priest and anti-high priest, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. And St. Luke notes without comment how God's word was speeding along outside all these channels which men had dug for it, and which they believed to be indispensable, to another and hidden, unknown outlet—to a man named John, of obscure parentage, dwelling apart from the courts of kings or ways of influence in the desert as unknown as himself.

✓ We can measure the contempt which would be felt for such a man ^{as John} by the scorn which still rings in Pilate's voice, when in answer to our Blessed Lord's question, he exclaims, "Am I a Jew?" We remember how, in after-times, tradition has it that two of our Lord's brethren, as they were called, were brought before Domitian, as descendants from David, and were dismissed for their poverty and insignificance as incapable of being claimants to the throne. *um m*

— Jewish religion, as expressed in its decadent representatives, had opportunity afterwards of expressing what they thought of John, and a Herod killed him. And yet here with John in the desert, and not there with the great ones of the earth, was the word of power and the centre of interest for the world's progress at the time. It is a familiar experience. We know it, and chronicle it in many of our proverbs and sayings: "It is the unexpected that happens." "It is the triumph of the unknown." "The last shall be first, and the first last." "Many are called, but few are chosen." "Many join in the procession, few are inspired." But we do not always go on to see the reason, that where the golden seam of God's providence and work has disappeared, there only remains bare rock and useless toil, and that prosperity and greatness and power are transferred to surroundings however humble, to instruments however weak, if God's word be there in the fulness of its riches.

If we will consider, is it not always so? Why is it? Why are we asked to believe that God should have singled out a nation, so peculiarly unattractive in their history as the Jews would seem to have been, to be His own chosen people? We know the rugged majesty of the Roman, his splendid imperial instincts, his living embodiment of power and manhood, which still leave a halo of

glory round Rome the eternal city, with its thousand memories. If it were Greece, with its profound thoughts, its matchless poetry and splendid art, we could understand it—here, where the Divine in man has seemed to come nearer to the surface, and permanently enrich humanity; but why the Jew? Yet so it is. He who most is disposed to cavil at the Divine estimate of the world's history, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, must feel that the Jew is a present problem which cannot be explained off-hand. Clearly he has had a past; it is difficult to believe that he has not a future, the wanderer of the nations, indispensable to all, yet cruelly persecuted and oppressed; thriving, yet never prosperous as a nation. We surely do not make enough in our modern perplexities of the strange and unique phenomenon, of this nation to whom we believe that the word of God came, which bears witness in its decay to the loss of a privilege, whose very memory is a tradition of power.

It is so with the Bible itself. Say what we will, minimize as we like, power which might conceivably be supposed to lie in other regions, where human skill in thought and language has been at its highest, has passed over into this collection of simple writings, and has made the Bible one of the greatest powers in the world in the formation of character, the relief of sorrow and the sanction and

inspiration of morality. We might stop to see the same thing in the strange fact that Jerusalem, the waterless inland city, and Judæa, the little strip of land between East and West, were chosen as the theatre of such tremendous events, fraught with so great issues.

I

We certainly should realize this great truth in the history of to-day, when there is so much to make us forget it, that power follows the word of God, even into the unknown and into the desert. Where that word is not, the important becomes insignificant; where it penetrates, the unknown becomes important. We are being taunted at the present moment with the impotence of Christianity to restrain human passion, its comparative failure in the face of non-Christian ethics, devoted patriotism, and natural virtues. Men are never tired of telling us that the Church no longer counts in politics or in worldly development. But I would point out that the word of God did not turn aside to water the parched ground of an Annas or Caiaphas, the accredited agents of religion. It is quite true that a Christianity which has lost its virtue, or a Church which has lost its vitality, may be, nay, has been, again and again, as ruthlessly

passed over by the word of God as emperors or systems of rebellious aggression against His Holy Law. It is an old lesson, an old warning, which we never learn, and never accept, that privilege counts for nothing with God. God passes by those who refuse to work with Him; at the most, He works by them and not with them. Nation or individual or Church, if they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life, in a moral cowardice which shrinks from hard things and great responsibilities, are passed aside by God, and are left bare by the receding tide of His great purpose.

“Thy kingdom come.” It is the first obvious Advent thought. It is a prayer which carries us into regions of sacrifice and noble purpose; it is a prayer which demands humility and submission to the Divine will. The great nations of the world had their opportunities, and lost them. The Jews had their opportunity, and lost it. It is our turn to-day. What are we going to do with our Imperial responsibility? There it is; Tiberius Cæsar sits on his throne; we are shouting ourselves hoarse with our grandiloquent cries. We think imperially, we are trying to act imperially. We open the map with pride, if red means the extent of the British Empire; we close it with shame if it means the extent of the empire of Jesus Christ. There are our procurators and representatives

in all parts of the world, ready to uphold the honour of the British flag, but not quite so sure of what they ought to do with the cross of Jesus Christ, and very Pilates in their keen scrutiny of the political trend of religious enterprise. There are our dependants, the different Herods which rule by our means, to whom we exhibit too often a civilization barely tinged with Christian responsibility, and who, in imitating European manners, find them largely composed of European vices. There are our allies, perhaps in some ways more religious than ourselves, whom we leave to societies and amateurs, if they wish to study the religious sources of our strength, while we give them of our best instruction in everything else which has to do with the construction or defence of our material empire. Annas and Caiaphas are not wanting, rival religious agencies, rival religious claims strive with each other in deadly theological contest, until perplexity merges into disgust, and disgust into opposition; and the word of God passes on its way, leaving those channels which have choked and polluted it. It is a great thing to lie in the way of the Providence of God. Thank God, the individuals which make the nations, and the societies which consolidate their efforts, are more in earnest to-day than they have been for many years. I feel in appealing to you to make your usual

contribution to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, that I am not asking you to pay an annual hush-money, which shall save you for another year from being pestered by a disagreeable applicant. Men are alive to its duties, keen in its ventures, and resolute in their determination. It remains for us to rouse the nation to a sense of what it means to be put in trust with the gospel. We must begin here with our schools, and stop the terrible risk which there is in a national life no longer permeated with Christianity, and never rest until the map marked with the red of British dominion is also marked with the gold of the empire of Jesus Christ.

II

But if God's messenger was strange, if emperor and king and guest were passed by as founders of His empire, even stranger was His message. Progress, not retrenchment, was in the mind of kings, an ever-widening luxury and aggrandizement for the future, not a mournful looking into the past. We cannot imagine "repentance" as a word in the vocabulary of Tiberius or Herod, or any way of the Lord other than their own way. If Domitian could not blush, certainly a Herod would know and care little about his past misdeeds.

Even religion had twisted and turned God's revelation, putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, perverting promises and minimizing judgments. A Messiah reigning on the throne of David, an earthly kingdom and freedom from the Roman yoke—thus they brooded and plotted, and the day of the Lord was to them darkness.

And every age has a tendency to magnify its own importance, to proclaim its own millennium, and shout aloud its proud message, until the voice of God is driven away into quiet corners, where they only can hear it who have ears to hear, the ready heart, and the humble mind. Is there not a strange discrepancy between the important things as the world counts importance, and the important things according to the mind of God? We have many indications of this in the world around us to-day, the most startling instance of which is the proposal that religion in our schools should be ruled out of the category of useful knowledge, and be taught as an extra subject to those who desire it, and be left to private enterprise. We have already seen how the gospel message takes quite a second place in the perilous blessings of European civilization which we give to the heathen world, as we watch the missionaries sent out by private societies groping like gleaners over a well-reaped field, to pick up here and there some stray remnants

which the better side of our material gospel has touched. But perhaps we see it more subtly still in the growing distaste for the old message. The Church in her wisdom has distributed the mysteries of the Faith through the long course of the Christian year ; feeling and knowing that these things are not apprehended by intellectual power, as something to be known and assigned to their proper place in our mental repository, but that they are mysteries, that is, hidden truths, whose aspect is ever changing in the varying light of our shifting experience, and that we need to pray over them, and live in them, and measure them by the rule of Scripture and Christian tradition.

Christmas with its long period of Epiphany following it, Easter with its forty days, Trinity with its long series of Sundays—we cannot spare the time from these merely to proclaim the virtues of sanitation, or the duties of citizenship, or the better observance of some neglected duty. We cannot turn our Sundays into mere days for collecting money for deserving objects. This is the way in which the world lays itself out for a message from God. But God's way is different ; it penetrates to the general health of the community, and does not concern itself with the mere local symptoms.

And hence the vast importance of seasons like Advent and Lent, in keeping resolutely before us

subjects which are first unpleasant, then deemed to be unimportant, then downright mischievous, then as the mere scares with which an unworthy nurse would try to terrify her refractory children.

God's message to us at this particular moment is to consider and weigh well the vital importance of four great truths : death and judgment, heaven or hell ; of one of them every one is certain, of the others they are certain who can trust God, and who can read the writing of experience in the world around us. We move about in a world subject to death. Day by day we are reminded that an estimate is being placed upon our actions. We find when we seek for the world's posts of honour, or of usefulness, that we are already judged by outside opinion, from the servant who depends on his "character," as it is called, to the candidate for honours, who finds that his capacities and drawbacks are known and pigeon-holed in the *bureau* of public opinion. We ourselves habitually judge ourselves at the bar of conscience. So that we ought to have no difficulty in seeing that a final judgment as to our character and capacity is, to say the least of it, probable, and, in view of eternity, an event which we cannot pass by with indifference. Heaven as a state of bliss may be realized also, from our innate strivings after happiness and satisfaction, and our inability to attain to them. There

stand out in the lives of most of us, these "days of the Son of man," which are different to all others, days which have not depended on the costly expenditure of amusement, days which have not been wrung out of unyielding or forbidding circumstances by constant change and flight from stern necessity ; they may have been even days of suffering and outer gloom, but they were, for all that, days when we saw the Lord, days which opened up to us visions of a state which again and again, if we may trust these writings, has revealed itself to the saints of God. Here, again, we would not lightly miss an experience such as this, or the great possibility of eternal blessedness.

And turn away as we will, we cannot ignore the awful foretastes of hell around us, in sin which is the punishment of sin, in loss of dignity, health, life, honour, and happiness, which makes existence a living death. Ask many a poor sinner, and he will tell you, "I have been in hell, where the *pœna damni* and the *pœna sensus* both are to be found." Any one who has given himself over to a mortal sin will know that if it be only in that "sorrow's crown of sorrow, the remembering happier things," that remorse is to the losses of hell what repentance is to the joys of heaven. Tiberius and Herod, and Annas and Caiaphas bury all these things out of sight. They are ugly, and must be covered up.

Let us eat and drink, let us drain the cup of luxury which civilization puts within our reach. And Annas and Caiaphas say, "We are not like children to be coaxed by the promise of heaven, or to be frightened by the terrors of hell. We have something else to think about now, instead of a mediæval heaven." And as for hell, the majority of thinking Englishmen repudiate it, therefore we never mention it. But it is this word which comes to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he looks out and sees the funeral procession wending its way to the few feet of earth which will contain the owner of many lands and houses. He knows that in every eight minutes here in London some one dies night and day, that here is a question of the day that cannot be ignored, and in some sense more pressing than any. He sees the frantic rush after pleasure, men trampling each other down in their eagerness to seize the forbidden fruit, if only some one has whispered that it is pleasant to the eyes, good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. There is something pathetic in this great restlessness, which forbids a man to be quiet when any good is within his reach. There he is, like the fountain, bursting upwards, ever seeking to find the level from which he sprung, and day by day being diverted, checked, turned away, into unworthy channels. And here stands John the son of Zacharias. Here stands the

Church in her Advent solemnity, saying, "O Soul, you were made for God. Seek Him, He is your rest. You were made for happiness; it is here. You are the son of God. Here is He who became incarnate for you." Joy is the never-ceasing message which God proclaims to you. Heaven here, and heaven hereafter, in the satisfaction of every longing, in the gratification of all true aspirations. Sad it is to see what the great poet-critic has described as the characteristic of falling Rome, "a furious desire of pleasure, and a brutal incapacity of it." And God forbid that we should look on hell as the vile torture of a malignant cruelty. It has been pointed out that the poet of the last things himself does not portray his Inferno as a future torture-chamber for souls after death; but as a picture of man endowed with free-will, placing himself either through ignorance or through wilful pride in antagonism to the laws of his own moral being. Hereafter, those evil things which are here scattered and mitigated by the presence of good, by public opinion, and by the concealments of the world of sense, await the fiery ray of God's righteous judgment. The sinner is to himself his own hell, we know that. Our wisdom is to leave the great eternity to God, simply as He has revealed it, without comment, without explanation. It is something very dreadful; so is the

sinner's state, here. What that eternity precisely is, we dare not say. But the word of God to us this Advent will not allow us to forget the awful possibilities of suffering and loss which are involved in sin.

III

"The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." We should do well not to turn a deaf ear to the appeal of Advent for quiet, for times of serious thought, for a resolute facing of some of those great questions which concern time and eternity.

"We see all sights from pole to pole,
And glance and rush and bustle by,
And never once possess our souls before we die."

To many a man, the hour of death is his first really quiet time, and alone with his own soul he hardly knows it, its powers and its needs, and its strong vitality. Gradually he has been driven in, as outwork after outwork is taken; he can no longer take his exercise, or follow his all-absorbing sports and games. His acquaintances have gone away from the falling house, and his friends are few, and they gradually drop off; insensibly he is pressed in upon himself, until he finds himself alone, with his artificial life fallen from him, and he face to face with God. Surely we ought to make more of the

quiet times of our life. Our Lord has told us with His own lips to enter into our closet and shut the door, and pray to our Father which is in secret. In prayer, if it be only for a short time each day we can stand face to face with eternal verities, and deal with things that really signify, and talk to Him who links the past, the present, and the future in one. Here is an aspect of the desecrated Sunday, distinct from the insult offered to the Lord on His own day. A Sunday of restless excitement is "a quiet day" in the week, gone from a life which can ill spare it. Our real life grows in the sheltering peace of its time of quiet. And so let Advent, with its solemn tones, its *Dies Iræ*, its trump of judgment, its sombre warnings and its stately gloom, enter into our life; it has a message from God which we shall not find in the trodden path of this world's onward march. There is a friendliness in its cold shadow, a protection in its warnings and a reality in its seriousness. If England is to be the missionary nation of the world, if her empire is to be bound up with the empire of Jesus Christ, if we are to be a missionary people, and our hearts to be afire with the enthusiasm of the gospel, then we must have listened for and received the word of God. We must speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.

We must be convinced that we have a message to deliver, which is of the utmost importance to every nation, and to every living soul. It must not be as those who balance possibilities, or as those who timidly wait for such allowance of desiccated faith as modern thought may from time to time dole out to us. But as those who are put in trust with the everlasting gospel, the faith once delivered to the Saints, which is neither after man nor received of man, but which is taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ. We must say to the heathen, "We, as put in trust with the gospel, give you of our best, we make known to you the way of salvation; knowing that although God in His mercy can reveal Himself to you by the things that are made, yet we have a fuller message to deliver to you, which gives you a richer life here and a greater fruition hereafter. It is this message of God which we would hand on, the message which concerns the great verities of eternity, which we ourselves have heard in the quiet of our own lives, and which the Church proclaims with unwavering voice amidst the ceaseless Babel of the strife of tongues."

II

THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE

“ And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”—
ST. LUKE iii. 3.

IT is a long stretch from St. Paul's in the twentieth century to the banks of Jordan in the first ; from London, the brain and directing power of a great empire, to a wilderness in a neglected corner of a world-dominion, already within measurable distance of its decline and fall. Day by day we read in our newspapers things of present and vital importance to thoughtful men, it is only in church, you say, that we hear of Jordan and repentance, and old-world fancies and exploded speculations.

I

Is this statement a true one? Surely we may very much doubt it. Perhaps it would be fair to say that the message of St. John which he preached

THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE 19

by Jordan those many years ago is as real as ever it was, that the march of centuries with its steady tramp has not stifled that voice, nor have Imperial problems blunted its pertinence and persistency. After all, the public press represents on a large scale the speculations in public places on the public questions of the day, or the ordinary conversation of life on the passing events of the hour. And in conversation, in business, and in the common transactions of life the real man does not come to the surface, he does not wear his heart on his sleeve, or parade his private cares and the aspirations of his inner life. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy."¹ And it would be more true to say that an echo of this call to repentance has sounded in every age, among the most unlikely surroundings, and in the case of men who might have been supposed to be least susceptible to its summons. Certain it is that any one who can make himself heard, even if he be an impostor, will gather an audience if he can utter words which speak of pardon and forgiveness, of repentance and amendment, and the glad news of remission of sins. Why is it? Surely because, deep down in human nature, there is a restless craving for God, because made in the image and likeness of

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.

Him, to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures ; there is in man a Divine ambition which will not be appeased, which brushes aside that superficial merit which is but one man's opinion of another and reaches out after the absolute good to which God has told us that we may attain. God's message of repentance appeals to the best in human nature, which refuses to allow a man to put up with the lower estimate of mankind, or to believe himself to be happy in the pursuit of sin simply because other people tell him that he is so. God's injunction to him to be perfect haunts him with a great ambition to spurn mediocrity, and forbids him to rest in the contemptuous pity of a Being who provides a low standard of excellence for average humanity, and winks at degrading failure because man is weak. A pedantic scheme of moral excellence which ignores God is foredoomed to failure, because it does not deal with or demonstrate that preliminary clearing of the ground which God has proclaimed as repentance, and which He knows must accompany the highest aspirations after good and can alone make it possible. Certainly the preaching of the Baptism of repentance, when it was first proclaimed, attracted multitudes of various kinds, united at least in the Divine discontent with things as they were and with an earnest hope for the better things which

THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE 21

they believed might be ; Pharisees at least determined to preserve orthodoxy, Sadducees attracted by some possible chance of overthrowing it, publicans who felt that a man can be superior even to a degrading profession, soldiers who refused the moral disabilities which men are ever ready to thrust upon them. The multitude, with no mind and strong appetites, all that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and all that despised others, were there to listen. And the message was the same to all : " Turn, get out of the groove into which your life has sunk, lift the groaning chariot of your progress out of the rut which it has worn for itself ; go back to the old life and live it better ; do not lay on circumstances, or tradition, or your profession, or what is expected of you, the burden of your failure ; turn, repent, cast aside disabling sin, and feel that by the grace of God a man may rise above anything, be it prejudice or profession, and be the self which God designed him to be."

Emperors were beginning now to offer rewards to any one who would discover a new pleasure. St. John opens up to the world a new pain—repentance, which albeit it pervaded in every part the ritual and utterances of their sacred religion the Jew had contrived to enthrone on a pedestal remote from his ordinary life, and of which the average Roman would know nothing, unless

indeed a conscience still alive occasionally recalled him, or the dictates of prudence reproved him, or remorse for wrongdoing haunted him, with its Nemesis and inevitable fate. And it would be idle to say that repentance is ever regarded as a welcome or profitable thought, except by those who are in earnest, and who are driven in on themselves by the stress of life. It is only because we have got used to them that we cease to notice the abject terms in which we approach God, as, for instance, in an ordinary service such as those in which we habitually engage, when we come to church ; cries for mercy and salvation mount up to God, side by side with protestations of sin, weakness, and unworthiness. It is difficult sometimes to recognize the self-righteous and eminently respectable Pharisee in his self-assumed garb of a miserable sinner, or to recognize the propriety of reiterated assertions of a deliberate intention to lead a new life in one who exhibits an uniform persistency in courses not to be distinguished from the ordinary ways of the wicked world.

“ Repentance.” What is it? Why is it? Why its frequency? Why its universality? Can it be true that this is a pressing need? May it not even suggest a morbid introspection, subversive of true self-sufficiency and manly progress? The man who is great of soul is one who counts himself

worthy, being worthy, of great things. Take care lest in the depressing atmosphere of a perpetual repentance you drop into little-mindedness which takes a morbid pleasure in considering whatever it does to be wrong.

II

What was this message of St. John's? What is repentance? Repentance is that change of mind which turns away with sorrow from anything that is wrong, which owns it, and amends it, and is willing to start afresh. So that repentance is the persistent enemy of a perpetual defect—namely the contented acquiescence in old unworthy habits because they are old—habits which have ceased to move our indignation because we have got used to them; habits which we never own to God or man because it is best to say nothing about them; habits which we do not intend to alter, because we do not believe it possible that we ever should. So in religion there creeps in that dead formalism which eats away its vigour, so in life there enters that stolid custom, which is to the man like the law of the Medes and Persians—it altereth not; and, either in the form of prejudice or fixed idea, renders him insensible to any fresh influence; so that after a certain period he ceases to grow, the

branches that are never pruned cease to bear, and heavenly influences pass over him and leave him unmoved; his green leaves wave in the air, his trunk still clutches the ground, but Jesus Christ comes to it seeking fruit, and finds none, nothing but leaves in the ill-kept tree, an arrested growth in the unrepentant life.

Is it not true that we think repentance would be an excellent thing for many people—for those publicans and soldiers, for instance, for that common herd of useless men—but not for ourselves? Are we not labouring to bring about the reform of the drunkard? Are we not seriously striving to impart to our children the saving knowledge that honesty is the best policy, and that thrift is the true corrective for waste and want? Are we not willing to contribute a trifle to penitentiary work? And no one is more ready than we are to lament the decadence of the times. But if we read the short accounts of St. John's ministry in the Gospel, we find that nowhere were his denunciations more scathing, and his exhortations more earnest, than when he was addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious world of his time. And our religious services, which we have received to use, are not meant for, or adapted merely to, the outcast and abandoned, but to such persons as ourselves, that we may cry mercy and protest penitence,

and promise again and again an oft-renewed repentance, repentance, that is, for ourselves and not for other people. Surely, unless we realize this we are in great danger of unreality, for there is nothing so numbing to all discipline as to use strong words which have lost all their meaning, and to promise actions which we never mean to perform. Repentance means for us, then, roughly, that we must turn, make an alteration, own ourselves in the wrong, and start afresh.

Is this necessary? Is this desirable? What has become of Christian perfection? Is it not a common-place of our advanced civilization that one of the most necessary things with respect to our modern machinery is not only a knowledge how to use it, but how to repair it? The very delicacy and intricacy of it render it necessary that there should be constant inspection and almost constant repairs and adjustment, minute they may be, but necessary. Now, we know, or we ought to know, that the machine which we loosely label self is more complicated than any machinery, however delicate, of man's device, and is subject to constant disorder. There are all those strong wheels of appetite and passion, any one of which, if allowed to get out of gear, to become heated, or ill regulated, may work ruin to the whole machine. There is the mind, so sensitive that it is liable to

deflection hither and thither by changes in the moral and intellectual atmosphere ; there is the spirit, with its subtle connection with forces which we so little understand, but which, at any moment, may assert themselves and snap off all vital connection ; and there is the will, supreme, to be obeyed or to be flouted, the motor-spring of all, of every movement of progress or arrest or retrogression. It is inevitable that this machine should need constant repairs, that day by day we should have to stop and correct it, clean and adjust it. Nothing could be more fatal than to say, "This wheel is out of gear, but I can go on without it ; this bearing has become heated, but it does not matter ; the machine does not answer to the guiding-gear, the brake will not act, still I can go on." There comes at last either the abrupt check or the catastrophe. Repentance is not such a remote thing, after all ; it means for all of us, the very best of us, a determination, by God's grace, to execute repairs while we may, the daily repairs which the rough environment and the friction of life render necessary ; the determination to go on, with life unimpaired, in full union with God, under the complete dominion of a sanctified will ; our whole being, body, soul, and spirit, working complete and entire ; a daily repentance correcting a daily failure. "See that ye walk accurately,"

systematically, definitely, as God wanted you to act, not at half-speed and with half-powers, but fully and completely. Repentance is no morbid introspection of a man afraid to advance; it is the scientific repair under the eye of God of those defects which, left to themselves, would spread; the refitting and renewing with diligent care and earnest regrets of that which, after all, is a trust committed to us, of which He said, "Occupy till I come."

But repentance means for many a man a great deal more than this, and sorrowfully we know it. Years ago, it may be, there was a breakdown of a serious and awful nature; he patched it up, as well as he could, he told nobody, nobody need know, but part of the machinery of his life is damaged, it is inoperative, it is even a source of danger to him. Holy Scripture is very careful to tell us what an old sin may be. It shows us how true it is that God "requireth that which is past." It is an old sin bitterly bewailed which works itself out in the clouded evening of David's life. We think so much of the few days and years which make up our existence, that we forget how short, how little it all is in God's sight. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday,"¹ and that which we have forgotten or buried away in some dark cupboard of oblivion lives and

¹ Ps. xc. 4.

energizes in God's sight. The Atonement has shown us the abiding nature of sin; it has shown us that sin cannot be decently buried by the side of the path and left, that as with the law of the land in the case of capital crime, so with the law of God in the case of mortal sin, both one and the other clamour for justice. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after."¹ Why is there that inability to attain the highest? Why do resolutions fail and earnest aspirations sink back crushed on the heart which put them forth so earnestly, so eagerly? Let Achan answer as he sits in his tent anxiously concealing his buried sin. The forbidden wedge of gold, the Babylonish garment of secret transgression checks and chills his generous enterprise. "God requireth that which is past."² And repentance for him means that he must face what he has done; it means that he must try and see what even one sin means in disturbing the equilibrium of his life and in outraging the majesty of God. It is easy, comparatively easy, to mourn over the consequences of sin and over the sense of loss of self-respect which it entails. It is not so easy to mourn for sin as an offence against the love of God. "Make me to know my sins" must be his prayer, not with a picturesque confession

¹ 1 Tim. v. 24.

² Eccles. iii. 15.

of sinfulness and of frailty shared with the rest of mankind, but with a personal knowledge of personal sins, in their blackness, their degradation, and their ingratitude. For sin unconfessed remains as a permanent source of weakness, while repented of it may be made a source of strength ; penitence is the best road to take after innocence, and the golden city has many gates ; but never let us fall into the error of supposing that knowledge of wickedness is wisdom, or that an acquaintance with sin is a finish to a liberal education. A man who has seen the world, as the saying is, may after all have brought with him the seeds of moral fever which it is difficult to eradicate, and must in the end sink back abashed before the wonderful power of innocence :—

“ Wounds of the soul, though healed, will ache ;

The reddening scars remain and make

Confession.

Lost innocence returns no more ;

We are not what we were before

Transgression.”

But how difficult it is for us to think that in our ordinary lives we need repentance ! Have we any intention of turning ? Do we see any necessity to do so ? There are two ways of looking at our lives for all of us. In the one way we complacently ask ourselves, Is this a sufficient recognition of the obligations which Christianity imposes on me ?

We are not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, we fast twice in the week, we give tithes of all that we possess ; whereas another is asking, What more is there that I can do for God, who has done so much for me ? And there speedily rise up visions of work still to be done, of possible amendment, and of renewed energy. Advent prompts us to place ourselves for a moment upon the tribunal, and to judge ourselves before we are judged of the Lord. And lo ! how clearly it stands out, how very little distinctively Christian there is in my life. If I were a moral and upright unbeliever would there be any startling and striking difference between my life in those conditions and my life in these ? What stake have I in Christianity ? What have I ventured on its truth ? Does not repentance, such as the Baptist preaches, mean this to me, that I must arise and do that which I have shrunk from, that which I have put off doing ? Does it not mean that I must commit myself ? Does it not mean that I must no longer come to Jesus by night, secretly for fear of His enemies, but that I must be resolute to speak for Him, to defend Him, in the club or in the office, where His Name is assailed in the perpetual chatter of controversial frivolity, or in the audacity which is afraid of being afraid, and the irreverence which dreads the contempt of being reverent ? Does it not mean that

I am no longer going to be one of those who in cowardice make the great refusal, who deem myself unworthy of eternal life, and shrink from the discipline of a well-ordered conversation? There would be hope for many a man if he would only do something fresh, if he would arouse himself and get free from that position which he believes to be sitting still, but which in reality is steady retrogression. But with many more the Advent call would mean the change which will lead them to give up just that one thing which represents the broken law, the imperfect life, the broken chain of grace which links them to God. "Yet lackest thou one thing"—something to be forsaken, something to be cast away, something to be brought under the discipline of the Cross. It is so easy to be religious with a reservation; it is so easy, with Ananias and Sapphira, to get the credit of renunciation while we keep back part of the price. Surely it is idle to believe in the omnipotence of God if we cannot trust Him to free us from the impotency of some hereditary taint. It is idle to trust in Christ the Liberator if we hug our chains and linger in captivity. It is melancholy to boast of freedom and to allow year after year to find us still in fetters. The divorce between faith and practice, between orthodoxy and morality, is always terribly easy. It is this more than anything else which brings in converts to the

devil's society for propagating infidelity, which is sometimes more successful than the society which propagates the gospel. Is it not written, "By their fruits ye shall know them"?¹ And how shall I recognize the power of Christianity in a religion which cannot help a man to throw off even one bad habit?

But with most of us repentance means a vigorous effort to combat the deterioration which sets in even in our best efforts. Why is it that the Church is making itself so little felt? Why are we not influencing the world around us more than we do? If a tenth of our prayers were answered the world would be a different place, and why are they not answered? "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."² It would be something if Advent led us to repair more frequently and more earnestly the broken and worn-out machinery of our devotion, if it led us to consider the provocation of our offering, the feebleness of our well-worn routine of almost mechanical prayer. It would be something if, instead of bewailing the evils of society, we seriously took ourselves in hand, and determined that there should be at least one stumbling-block the less in the pathway of Christ's progress. But it will never be easy. It was not an inspiring message after all to the

¹ St. Matt. vii. 20.

² St. James iv. 3.

publican to go back to his desk and rise above the temptation of his trade. It was not a romantic enterprise which St. John set before the people who hung upon his words, simply to go and exercise a life of practical benevolence. Had he nothing to say to the temptations of the soldier's life? Had he no new environment of sheltered protection in which to place him? My brethren, if we listen to the voice of St. John, it may be no outward eye will detect any striking change. The publican will be back at his desk to-morrow, and only God will know that a St. Matthew is sitting there ready for a higher call, when it comes. The people will be scattered here and there each to his own circle, each to his own duties, and no one but God will know the secret of that self-denial and brotherly love. The soldier will follow the eagles as he has done before, but a centurion full of faith will be found hereafter ready to meet Jesus.

Repentance—it is the sudden arrest of a careless world by Christ's Advent. The way of progress lies there and nowhere else. No advance is possible except across the body of that vanquished sin; no holiness is possible except along the lines of that neglected good. Repentance, after all, does not mean an heroic dislocation of our ordinary ways, it means going back to the old life, and living it better, in the fear of God.

III

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—ST. MATT. iii. 2.

“THE kingdom of heaven!” So it rang out by the banks of Jordan from the lips of that fearless preacher of righteousness, St. John Baptist. He was no courtier. Our Lord Himself bids us notice that he had no signs of soft apparel or delicate living upon him. A raiment of camel’s hair, a cave in the desert, and a diet of absolute austerity. Such was the man. And now he is proclaiming a kingdom. It was a dangerous proclamation to make, both in Roman and Jewish ears. “Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar” was abundantly true. And the Jews had their own views of what they meant by a kingdom, and the particular leader who was to redress their wrongs and carry out their programme and set everything right with superhuman sagacity. There must have been many who pricked up their ears as they heard the news | “The time is fulfilled,

and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." There were the slaves in all the degradation of utter loss of personal freedom and political interest. Far away in Rome—if rumour reached so far—there were the gladiators who ministered to a brutal love of amusement with their life-blood. There was woman, made to be a helpmeet for man, largely in a state of degradation. There were public evils and private wrongs to be adjusted and righted; and now here is a new government proclaimed: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

My brethren, do not think that St. John was juggling with words. He meant what he said; he knew of and cared for the fears and hopes and longings and wants around him. We mean to-day what we say when we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Jesus Christ is a King, who knows our every need better than we know it ourselves, who is touched with our infirmities, and feels our sorrows, and will right them if we will let Him. There was only one thing then, and there is only one thing now, which prevents the reign of Jesus Christ, and that is, man himself, man who will not have Christ to reign over him.

I

For what does He claim? He claims a universal dominion. He claims the whole world. "All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall do Him service." Hence the missionary leaves home and friends and goes out in steady confidence; Africa, China, the Isles, Japan—all belong to Jesus Christ, and He will support me as I push His empire into those regions which as yet know Him not. Here in this England of ours, here in London, Jesus Christ claims an absolute sovereignty over it all. And yet how far we are from recognizing it! Here, as of old, there are many wistful cars anxiously straining for the news of deliverance. There is the huge mass of indifference without God in the world; there is reckless waste and hopeless want; there is sin in all its terrible defiance of the very laws of human existence. There is suffering and misery, and, worse than all, an inability for a man to assert his powers, as a man, to make his own way in the world. There is confusion and difficulty, misunderstanding and suspicion, wherever we turn—

"Where is Thy reign of peace,
And purity, and love?
When shall all hatred cease,
As in the realms above?

“When comes the promised time
That war shall be no more,
And lust, oppression, crime
Shall flee Thy Face before?”

A modern writer, speaking of the impression left on his mind by a visit to the Grande Chartreuse, in the days when it was still occupied by its devoted band of religious men, describes to us the solemnity of the night offices and the suggestiveness of those solemn intercessions: “I heard them,” he says, “interceding for men who, at that moment of the dark night, were forgetting God and truth, purity and goodness. I heard the murmur of the solemn petition which had gone up to the throne of grace night after night for many centuries, prayers for the poor and the wretched, for the guilty and the crime-laden, for the dying and the dead, for the faint-hearted that they might hope again in God, for the light-headed lest they might forget Him.”¹

Pray on, wherever you may be; pray for those dark spots of sin and those sad patches of sorrow which darken our Christian cities. There are times when all seems to be in confusion, marching and counter-marching, the groans of the fallen, the perplexity of the leaders, the failure of the enterprise; when, lo! in the hands of the Master-mind

¹ Dean Spence: “Cloister Life,” etc., p. 189.

of Him who watches the evolution of the conflict, all things fall into their right places, the meaning of the confusion becomes evident, the sorrow and anguish have not been in vain ; Christ reigns after all. The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly, but He that dwelleth on high is mightier. The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus Christ reigns.

But patience ! "Patience"—how we hate that word ! but no lasting good is to be had without it. The child tears off his bandages and refuses his medicines, and shrieks at the doctor as a cruel butcher ; the wise man waits and is patient, and, if need be, endures. We can always cut the knot of a difficulty, but the truly great man wants to untie it. Of course, it is true that destitution and hunger and want ought to be, and must be, attended to at once by wise remedies. They do not brook delay. But you yourselves, dear brethren, would be the first to say, "We do not want mere charity, we want a solution of a recurring difficulty, the adjustment of what seems to be an inequality of opportunity."¹ Be assured of this, that there is no lack of ardent desire on the part

¹ The first part of this sermon, pp. 34-42, was preached to a large contingent of the unemployed, who signified their wish to attend the service at St. Paul's on the Third Sunday in Advent, 1905.

of every right-minded man to do all he can to help while these great questions are being worked out. Here, in this cathedral only two weeks ago, with our Bishop at our head, we supplicated God, in a solemn act of prayer, and we have been praying again to-day, "O God, the Lord of life, whose ears are ever open to the cry of the poor. Lo ! we fall before Thee in our humiliation. We seek Thee in our perplexity and need. In the midst of our abundance there are those who do not know where to win their daily bread. Do Thou, O Lord, give light. Pardon what has been amiss in us ; remedy that which has been wrong, grant to us the wisdom and the courage and the patience which may heal our troubles. Relieve the sick, and feed the hungry. Give justice and peace in our time ; through the infinite mercy of our Redeemer and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is less than a month ago that three sermons were preached here on behalf of this same object, and a collection made for the purpose, and from this place have gone forth some of the most serious efforts to meet the difficulties of the situation. So that we at all events, should resent the accusation that the troubles of the present time are publicly or privately unknown to, or uncared for, by us. There is always a danger of impatience. Think of those slaves of whom I spoke just now. What

was patience to them? It seemed as if Christ had nothing to say to their cruel grievance. His kingdom came and slavery stayed. But Christ had enunciated principles which tended to make slavery impossible, those principles which St. Paul proclaimed so tenderly to Philemon about a runaway slave; and gradually through long years slavery has been dying out, and now only lingers on as a belated survival of un-Christianized barbarism. So it was with those blood-stained shows in which men killed each other for sport: Christ seemed to have done nothing to stop them, when all of a sudden it was found that the whole system collapsed at the earnest preaching of one devoted man, because Christian principles had condemned it and made it impossible. So it has been with the position of woman; so it has been with wars of aggression; so it will be with the evils which paralyze us to-day. "Sirs, ye are brethren." "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."¹ These are the laws of Christ's kingdom; these He will set up and proclaim, if we will let Him. But we are all apt to think that we know better. "We can hurry man, but we cannot hurry God."

All this strange turmoil and conflict are in His hands. We cannot alter His plans, but we can

¹ St. John xiii. 35.

mar them and defer them and make their operation slow. Something has been done, after all; it is not an eternal patience—patience while old evils remain—but patience while the old evils are being dealt with in the best way. As late ago only as 1849 an outbreak of cholera at Plymouth¹ was attended with scenes of misery and horror which seem, as we read of them, to be almost incredible. And the writer who describes them truly says that the severity of the outbreak, and, he might have added, the utter inability to meet it, could never be paralleled in these days of improved sanitary and hygienic conditions. Bad as they may be, things are improving; and I fearlessly deny that the heart of the nation or the vast majority of our countrymen are insensible to the needs of those who are now suffering, or unconscious of the gravity of the difficulty to be solved, and the complex causes which produce it. And, therefore, the only other thought I would leave with you is this: “The kingdom of God is within you.” It is not only the cause and the measure which we must think of, but the man. If, therefore, you feel that God has called you to help solve a very difficult problem, such as that which has to do with the labour question of the hour, let me beseech you each to look to

¹ Kelway: “Life of G. R. Prynne,” p. 58.

yourselves. There are problems in our own lives as difficult as the problems in large cities. A man may be beaten down by temper, or by passion, or by desire—by a hundred things, so that he becomes useless for work in God's service. Let us each in our several ways work towards the same end—the solving of a great and pressing difficulty—and to that end let us offer to God ourselves, each of us as we are and what we are. "Men make a city, and not walls," was said by a great man on a famous occasion; and it is the individual man who counts in carrying forward Christ's kingdom. You tell us not to think we are going to cut the knot by doles. I would also say: Do not let us cut the knot by impatience. Patience does not mean doing nothing while we starve, but it does mean sifting and trying and discarding every unworthy, mean, and trifling remedy, and pressing on until we feel that we are moving in the right and ordered path of progress. If God says, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward,"¹ then we can advance, even through the Red Sea, towards our promised land; but, on the other hand, "Except the Lord build the house: their labour is but lost that build it."²

¹ Exod. xiv. 15. ² Ps. cxxvii. 1.

II

But the kingdom of God whose advent the Baptist announced is something much more definite than God's reign in the world. It has been said, with undoubted truth, that our Lord "proclaimed Himself the Founder of a world-wide and imperishable society. He did not purpose to act powerfully upon the convictions and the characters of individual men, and then to leave to them, when they believed and felt alike, the liberty of voluntarily forming themselves into an association, with a view to reciprocal sympathy and united action. From the first the formation of a society was quite as essential a feature of Christ's plan as was His redemptive action upon single souls."¹ He founded, in fact, a vast spiritual society, in the form of a kingdom on a plan at once marked by what the world would call originality and audacity. In the Sermon on the Mount He proclaims its laws ; in His charge to the Twelve Apostles He exhibits the outward agency by which this kingdom would be established. During His forty days' sojourn on earth before the Ascension it is of this kingdom of God and of things pertaining to it that He speaks to His Apostles. The Church is a

¹ Liddon ; "Bampton Lectures," Lect. iii. p. 151, 1st edition.

great fact which we are sometimes tempted to ignore, or at the most to regard as an exclusive and somewhat bigoted misapplication of some scriptural phrase, which has reared a huge structure on the basis of human pride, that ecclesiastics may lord it over God's heritage, and that certain invertebrate Christians, who cannot stand alone, may be propped and supported by sundry outward and meaningless forms which those of a robuster faith repudiate and disdain. Indeed, we are bidden now, under stress of controversy, to fall back on what is called fundamental doctrine, from which the Church and her sacraments would be excluded as at least negligible luxuries, designed only for those who need them. We could not make a greater mistake. I venture to say again, with reverence, that the Church as a Divine society was just as much a part of Christ's plan as was His atoning death upon the cross. If "He died that we might be forgiven," He also "died to make us good." In our ordinary actions of benevolence we know that a great donation towards alleviating distress must be followed up by a systematized plan to effect its distribution. Would any donor, who had carefully thought out such a plan and imposed it on his executors, be content if they cast it aside as indifferent or substituted another in its place? There is no

doubt about Christ's plan. He Himself has told us, in words which elevate at least sacramental truth into the very forefront of essentials, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."¹ So important is it to grasp this that I would quote a well-known passage in a sermon by the late Dr. Temple, in which he says, "We are sometimes asked to think that the Church only exists in the union of believers, and has not a reality of its own.

"Now, it is perfectly clear that in the New Testament the idea of the Church is not that. Men talk sometimes as if a Church could be constituted simply by Christians coming together and uniting themselves into one body for the purpose. Men speak as if Christians came first, and the Church after; as if the origin of the Church was in the wills of individual Christians who composed it. But, on the contrary, throughout the teaching of the Apostles we see that it is the Church that comes first, and the members of it afterwards. . . . They are called into that which

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 (R.V.).

already exists; they are recognized as members when they are within; but their membership depends upon their admission, and not upon their constituting themselves into a body in the sight of the Lord."¹

And I should like to point out, if I could, that to ignore this plan is not only to dishonour the terms of Christ's royal proclamation, but also that it is to reject a plan which He who knew what was best for man, because He was Man, left for the salvation of the world. There have been many plans before and since that proclamation, excellent in themselves and strong in their appeal, but they have failed. Why? Because they have not reckoned on that strange perversity in human nature which, in spite of all appeals, by no means loves the best when it sees it. The failure of Christianity in itself, in so many regions, as we must sorrowfully admit, is a strong witness to the awful power of human free-will, which God is willing to instruct and strengthen, but never to force.

We may well ask, What is to be done with such a sinister phenomenon as the growth of youthful immorality in the face of culture, education, and refinement? What is to be done with the moral paralytic, who after each stroke

¹ Twelve sermons preached at the consecration of Truro Cathedral, p. 17.

of mortal sin seems more and more incapable of helping himself to rise? What is to be done with that strong band of passions and appetites, which are admirable servants under a strong will, but absolute tyrants under a weak one? Are we to give up as hopeless, except in the case of a few hothouse plants, the refinement of the theological virtues and the tender beauty of the fruit of the Spirit? The more we look into the laws and regulations of Christ's kingdom, the more we shall see how admirably it is adapted to human needs, and how completely it takes into account those conditions of weakness and instability which are the wreck of other systems. And may I say also, that the kingdom of Christ, His Church, acts as no mechanical charm, forcing a man into a groove in which he must needs remain? It would be contrary to all God's dealings with men if it were so, and therefore we are quite prepared to see, as we do see, citizens of His kingdom who have fallen lower than any who refuse to retain God in their minds at all. They come under the law of the corruption of the best, and they have to learn that the very best system can never dispense with the Divine element in man—the co-operation of his free-will. Still, for those who even imperfectly will make proof of its powers, here is a system of tried value and worth, which it would

be simply unfaithful for us to depose or neglect. When Trajan, early in the second century, issued his decree against clubs, as dangerous to the State, he may or may not have aimed obliquely at Christianity. Certain it is that the Church felt the adverse influence of this edict, as again and again it came under suspicion as a secret society, if it were only a burial club, yet certainly a society, which met in strange places and practised dark rites. In ways which they did not contemplate, the persecutors of Christianity were right. The Church was and is a club, a large benefit society extending through all civilized countries, of which the members are bound together by spiritual and mysterious ties.

It would be possible to expand this idea, to try and show how this spiritual benefit society is planned on a wise, beneficent, and complete scale, which we must not tamper with; to show how, as a member of it, a man is helped from his cradle to his grave, to show you its officers, its system of healing and of building up, its places and times of meeting, its benefits and its obligations; but I only would, in passing, ask you to notice this, that Christ in His Church provides for man in his weakness; and that this is where other systems fail. They ignore weakness, and provide mainly for a state of spiritual

and moral health, which again and again a man finds himself incapable of realizing. Sixty years ago the Sacrament of Baptism was the battleground of the Church. Fifty years ago, and continuously ever since, the Sacrament of the Altar has been in dispute, while it is always possible to raise an outcry as to Absolution. And Confirmation can easily be emptied of its supernatural grace and turned into a mere renewal of vows on the part of those who have come to years of discretion. But it is in these matters that the Lord Jesus Christ deals with fundamentals, that is to say, with matters that concern the fundamental conditions of our weakness.

Holy Baptism, to those who realize what it means, has long passed out of the region of barren controversy. It is a fundamental doctrine of Christ's Church, as dealing with a matter which has to be dealt with, if human nature is not to fail in the struggle, namely, original sin. For it is this which underlies a great deal of the difficulty connected with the transmission of vicious traits in the entail of a bad heredity. We are utterly unable to put into the category of negligible trifles such a thing as Confirmation, with its gift of strength at a time when strength is most needed for the battle of life. And every devout Churchman will be ready to endorse his pious

sentiment who said, "I do not doubt that your Communion profit you—they do more, they save you." It is not for us to be wiser than Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is a delicate and beautiful system, which He has committed to our charge. We dare not preach more, we may not preach less. The kingdom of God is at hand, it is in our midst; repent ye, and believe the gospel.

"Thy kingdom come:" so we meet the proclamation of the Baptist, determined to do our part in pushing further and further the frontiers of Jesus Christ, until the fulness of the Gentiles comes in, and God reigns the acknowledged King in His own world. "Thy kingdom come:" so we pray loyally and earnestly for the spread of His Church, that men may be brought more and more within the beneficent sway of His kingdom of grace. "Thy kingdom come:" so we bare our souls to His healing influence and almighty power, determined to keep back nothing which of right belongs to Him, but to labour on with earnest effort until Christ reigns in us without a rival, until we have brought "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."¹

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

IV

THE LAMB OF GOD

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—ST. JOHN i. 29.

TO-DAY,¹ Advent and Christmas meet with sharp abruptness. This Fourth Sunday has not exhausted its teaching and warning before it is caught up and overwhelmed by the incoming tide of Christmas Eve, sweeping in from the boundless ocean of the mystery of the Incarnation. The air freshens, the floods deepen, the river which has carried with it all the little streams of our human shortcomings, with their hopes and fears, has lost itself in a world's redemption, the salvation of the human race. And St. John's voice mingles with the voice of the angel to the Shepherds, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”; “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born

¹ The Fourth Sunday in Advent, this year, 1905, coincided with Christmas Eve.

this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”¹

And yet, let us steady ourselves to enter on this sea of mystery, by following the stream of St. John's teaching, ere we lose it in greater revelations of God's love. It is hardly necessary, surely, to pause to reassure ourselves that St. John knew what he was saying when he spoke these words. We are reminded that these were early days in which he spoke, that the ministry of our Blessed Lord was not yet enterprised, that at a later period the Apostles were utterly unable to appreciate a suffering Messiah, even when the truth was explained to them; we surely do not need to resort to theories of interpolation, or of prophecies concocted in the light of subsequent teaching. St. John's mind, we see, had already been running on that portion of Isaiah's prophecy which deals with Christ's coming kingdom; what more natural, therefore, than that he should go on to apply to our Lord Jesus Christ the prophecy of the Lamb led to the slaughter, in the well-known words of that prophet? Of course, if it be impossible for God to reveal to any one, even to His own messenger, a special knowledge of the future, then we must be silent; but if we believe, as most of us do here to-day, that the accredited forerunner had

¹ St. Luke ii. 10, 11.

a prophetic insight into truth, which afterwards was hidden from men even more privileged than himself, then we are not more startled by this isolated utterance of dogmatic clearness than we are by the sayings of Simeon, also hinting darkly at suffering and woe, while as yet the Incarnate Lord was but an infant, and His Human Life had shown no sign of its great destiny. No ; St. John stands before the ministry in the same attitude as that in which the herald angel stands before the infancy, both the one and the other appealing to us to join our song with theirs : "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."¹ What, then, did St. John see as the sun's rays smote upon him, and caused him to utter this voice ?

I

He saw a revelation of goodness ; he saw a sight which he had never seen before, not even when he thought of his good old father and his blameless mother, a sight which he had never seen in Pharisee or religious Israelite as they flocked out to hear him, and to be baptized ; he saw a good Man, a perfect Man, a Man such as man was meant to be ; whom he called a Lamb, in all that was symbolized in that title, of freedom from blemish or taint of ill, even from those faults of good men which so often

¹ St. Luke ii. 14.

cause their good to be evil spoken of. While we recognize in St. John's testimony a great deal more than this, let us not fail to recognize this glad testimony to a perfect life, as a joy in itself to those who can look upon it, even across the mists of obscuring controversy and human unworthiness. There lies at the back of men's minds, even when they know little of the true meaning of Christmas, a feeling that in this holy season any degrading selfishness is out of place, even if they do not go on to realize that sin is selfishness in its most acute form. And out of our despair at the failures of civilization, and the utter breakdown of so many schemes of improvement, when Christians seem to be the chief hindrance to Christianity, when practice scoffs at precept and conduct at creed, it is a comfort to pause at Christmas and say, It cannot be impossible ; it may be done ; heredity shall not mock us for ever, nor environment paralyze effort.

"Behold the Lamb !" Here once in the world has been seen what human nature might be, and lest I should say this is an example whose very uniqueness marks off its impossibility of attainment, I listen to the oft-repeated voice, "Follow Me."¹ I know how He has said, "Be ye therefore perfect,"² and I realize that it is no exaggerated piety which bids me pray, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this

¹ St. John i. 43.

² St. Matt. v. 48.

day without sin";¹ "Grant that this day we fall into no sin . . . but that all our doings may be ordered by Thy governance, to do always that is righteous in Thy sight; through Jesus Christ."²

Among the Christmas gifts which are bestowed upon us at the Saviour's birthday-cradle there are few more precious than this—the possibility of goodness. We are not always to say, "It is no good; if I give my money to the relief of the poor it will be misapplied and wasted; schemes of improvement and beneficence are foredoomed to failure, human nature is too much for us; it is in vain to grapple with wickedness in our towns, what has been will ever be, by a fated necessity."

Still worse, if we sit down beaten before the ideal which we have put before us in our own lives, firmly convinced of our own impotence, and certain of inevitable defeat. "Behold the Lamb of God." We cannot submit without a struggle to the loss of our own excellence. God has made us to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, and in this Lamb of God I see what in my measure I too might be. Here I see the body, no longer "the nearest camp to the enemy," to be crushed and humiliated as too dangerous to be encouraged, or too degraded to be treated even with respect, but I see in it the honoured friend and trusted servant of

¹ Te Deum.

² Third Collect at Matins.

a purified will. Here I feel the mind reaching out with ever fresh power into the infinite, and the spirit alive with the indwelling presence of God Himself. The ambition to be good dawns upon me, as I see that here alone is the real excellence of man, here alone is my true perfection. We have heard a great deal about refinement and beauty, and natural virtues. There is an innate Pelagianism in human nature which makes it too ready to imagine that Divine grace is superfluous, that Christianity has nothing more to offer than the example of a very good Man, and therefore fewer are putting Christianity to the test, fewer are striving to see whether there is not in the Christian ideal something which cannot be obtained elsewhere and in any other way.

A new type seems to be springing up, which not only studies what is called the science of comparative religions, but is rearing up, in a proud and contemptuous eclecticism, a moral standard which contains what is thought to be the best out of different religions, leaving out what it is pleased to call the non-fundamental doctrines of Christianity as undesirable and impossible. As you gaze to-day at the exhibition of a perfect life now first offered to the world, I ask you, Is it true that there are some things in your life which you never try to overcome, some blemishes which you do not

try to eradicate? Have you made terms with the enemy and allowed him to settle in a region of your life, where you leave him in undisputed possession, from which he may make forays on your happiness and your self-respect, to your own great discomfort and degradation? If so, this image of the Lamb presents no working ideal for your life. Innocence, guilelessness, unpopular virtues as they are, carry with them that extraordinary power which is unlike any other, and which is incompatible with tolerated sin and admitted incapacity, with that knowledge of wickedness which is not wisdom, whose treasury of knowledge is the record of human sin, in fact and fiction, whose ideal is to be credited with a knowledge of the world, to be ignorant of nothing which can shock, while it is able still to save appearances and avoid scandal.

Is it true that there are some excellences of Christianity which we never attempt to carry out? Humility is praised, but it is severely let alone lest in giving place to another we should lose our rank in the procession of life. Love, which thinks and speaks no ill of its neighbour, might make our intercourse dull and rob conversation of its brilliancy. Some people maintain that the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are impossible; no doubt they are unpopular. And yet, if we do not strive after their attainment, in vain does St. John say to

us on this Christmas Eve, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Is it true that there are some remedies for human weakness which we refuse to take, some food for spiritual growth which we refuse to receive? How is it that the sacramental system of Christ as delivered to His Church has come to be viewed almost as the badge of a party? And yet without it we shall never attain to that excellence which might be ours, as followers of Him who is the Lamb of God. It would be something if this Christmas we could trust God, and come to Him hungering and thirsting after righteousness, with the ambition of goodness all on fire within us; determined to be like Christ, obedient to His commands, sympathetic to His call, ready to love His precepts, to desire His promises, and to do His will. Not a mere honorary member of every sort of religion, a member of a nebulous Church which sums up all the unbelief, misbelief, carelessness, and indifference of the nation in the loose bands of a State establishment--but a member of Christ's Holy Church, which is His Body, through which the vital blood of holiness penetrates to every part with its mystic gift of life.

II

"Behold the Lamb of God!" St. John saw more than an image, of spotless purity and blameless

life; Christ to him was not only his Master and his Pattern; He was his Saviour; and so he speaks of "the Lamb of God," that is the Lamb which God Himself provided for the sacrifice, as of old He provided the victim for the sacrifice of Abraham. He is the Lamb, which might be spoken of as "of God," in its Divine and unblemished nature, recalling to him the daily morning and evening sacrifice in the temple, or the Paschal victims which, perhaps, even then were passing him in flocks, being driven up to Jerusalem for the feast. So the shepherds at Bethlehem on the first Christmas Eve, who, on Jewish testimony, are said to have been guarding the flocks used in sacrifice, would have heard with wonder the proclamation of a Saviour, of a salvation mightier than any which the blood of sacrifice was able to procure.

If St. John speaks to us of a spotless life, which has challenged the ambition of human nature to equal or approach, he speaks even more strongly of a self-sacrifice which is the predominant characteristic of sympathy. It must ever be a cause of great thankfulness that amidst so much indifference, heartlessness, and sin, the Christmas festival should still issue its appeal to benevolence and sympathy; that once a year, at all events, the family should appeal to each member of it to

rally with affection and united love to the common centre of their life and affection; that once a year, however faintly, the appeal of the homeless, the hungry, and the destitute should be heard, that men should realize their membership in the human family, and their duties towards it. It is something that even with discordant note and painful effort men should attempt to attune their voices to the strains of the angelic hymn, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." But there comes a time when men outlive the holly and the Christmas dinner. It is not likely that a feast of the family, as has been gravely proposed, will oust the feast of Christmas. Deep down in our hearts the great question is asked, Why is this birthday kept in a way in which no other birthday has ever been kept? Why is the Deliverer, the Babe of Bethlehem, honoured with a triumph such as no Roman Emperor in the hour of his greatest magnificence, no general who has brought a strong deliverance, no scientific benefactor of mankind, has ever attained to? And the answer will form itself out of the facts of a man's own life. "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."¹ There are hidden sorrows which no human benefaction can touch. There are enemies which remain when the tide of conquest has been most successfully

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

rolled back. There is a bitterness which no merriment can sweeten, a gloom which no earthly brightness can illumine; and it is here, in these matters, that the Babe of Bethlehem has shed forth His wondrous sympathy. Oh, marvellous paradox of Truth! He hath "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin,"¹ "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses"²—in an identification so complete, that it became part and parcel of Himself. We see Him, as the graphic pen of the Evangelist has depicted Him at the sunset of the Eastern evening, healing all that came to Him, as His sympathy bends down, lifts up, and takes away the load of personal grief from every sufferer.

The Atonement wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, which we, at all events, can never separate from His Incarnation, remains to us as the supreme act of sympathy in the region of our sorest need, "Behold the Lamb of God"—"Unto you is born this day a Saviour." Christmas will never lose its appeal to the sorrowful, the sad, the hopeless, the forlorn, as long as these words retain their meaning. And there comes a time to all when men at least wish that these words may be true; "when other helpers fail and comforts flee," and the heart in its bitterness cries out for its only Saviour, who knows whereof we are made, who

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

² St. Matt. viii. 17.

remembers that we are but dust. My brethren, it should not be difficult for us, on this day when we commemorate a great sympathy, on a day when we say in wondering amazement, "God so loved the world," to exercise a wider sympathy than as yet we have known. I ask you whether there is not room for more sympathy in those homes to which you will be hastening, all of you who have the privilege of a home, to keep Christmas? Is there, do you think, a bitter sense of loneliness, which forces itself upon that young wife who but lately believed herself to have won the whole heart of a devoted husband, as she finds herself more and more forsaken and neglected, unable as she is to minister to the wild restlessness of a life of excitement, and the ever-changing whims of a wearied pleasure-seeker? Is there a sense of desolation such as is described for us in the poet's wonderful conception of Andrea del Sarto in the yearning life which finds itself wedded to one who can neither sympathize with nor understand the ceaseless cravings of a great genius—

"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world, no doubt!"

Only the constant dragging down, the inability to enter into, to understand, the consuming passion of a great work; money, money, and still money,

or a lower level, the flesh-pots and comfort, rather than Canaan and victory?

Will there be family parties to-day, where brothers and sisters are alienated by rivalry and selfishness, and inability to understand each other? There are many fictions about Christmas which are not confined to the pages of a Christmas annual, and one of these fictions is that Christmas cheer can make a selfish man sympathetic. Christ can do so, Christmas can do so, not the feast of the family. Christ the Virgin's Son can do so, not the pale ghost of an emptied ideal. Sympathy He craves from you; sympathy like His own. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹ Husband and wife, there is this sympathy committed to you in that sacramental union which is as betwixt Christ and His Church, to make your home a haven to which your children can return when wearied and buffeted by the waves of this troublesome world. Brothers and sisters, you can bear each others' burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. Christian man, whoever you be, there is some soul waiting for you to bear his burden and to help him; some young life about to sink beneath the waves is stretching out a hand that you may save him; some Apollos to whom you may teach the Word of God more

¹ St. John xv. 13.

perfectly; some Mark whom you may restore to confidence and courage; some Saul of Tarsus whom you may touch by your constancy and save by your prayers; some Onesimus, some criminal slave, whom you scarcely know, who may have waited on you at dinner, or heard you speak, who is looking to you to restore him to usefulness and to God. "Sympathy" is a strong word. They must be strong shoulders which hope to bear burdens. Sympathy is a power which escapes from the easy life of worthless pleasure. But the world is right, sympathy is the prevailing note of Christmas, but only the true Christian knows what sympathy means.

III

"Which taketh away the sin of the world." Here is the last and strongest appeal of Christmas. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."¹ In some parts of England the old custom still lingers of ringing on Christmas Eve the devil's knell. As the bell peals out at midnight this is to symbolize in the poetry of religion that the power of the devil was crippled by the Virgin Birth on Christmas Day.

"The sin of the world." This is something

¹ St. John iii. 8.

more than the individual sins of human beings, it is the corruption of humanity, the blight of failure, and the curse of frustrated purpose known as sin. That is one of the saddest and most ironical sides of our modern Christmas rejoicing, that sin should be regarded as an appropriate exhibition of joy at its extinction. But the joy of this mighty deliverance wrought is a great one. It almost staggers the imagination to think of a world without sin, to think of London without sin, a golden city of fair streams and unpolluted life ; and yet the possibility is there, the victory is won. There is only one line of fortresses which holds out, and that is human free-will. And the free-will which I know most about is my own. Strange it is that that which, on the testimony of all experience and of all language, is our greatest bane, should still hold its ground by the free-will of man. Yet so it is, and nothing but the surrender of man's free-will to God is going to alter it. No civilization, no education, no change of circumstance, no knowledge of life and its conditions, is going to alter it. It must be the surrender of the free-will of man to God, which is to put into motion this purchased deliverance.

If we wish to see the weight of a world's sin, let us look at the burden which weighed down our Blessed Lord in the agony of Gethsemane. If we

would see the weight of one sin, let us search and examine ourselves in our preparation to-night for our Christmas Communion on the morrow. One sin the less would materially affect the happiness of our life ; one sinner the less would materially brighten the household. And the purified household would reach out with ever-widening circles, until we could imagine at least what a world might be which had accepted the Atonement wrought, the power of the precious Blood, and the Redemption of Israel.

A Christmas Eve, which falls on a Sunday, gives to many a greater opportunity of entering as they ought, with prayer and recollectedness, on so great a festival. Remember that the Church celebrates her anniversaries in a very different way to that in which the world celebrates hers. As often as not the world begins with a feast, the Church almost invariably with a fast. The fast of the Vigil of Christmas was yesterday, because we may not fast on Sunday, but the solemn quiet of this day of the Lord may surely usher us into a holier and more recollected observance of a very great festival. The Church will meet you with Psalms in which to lift your thankfulness ; with Lessons out of Scripture in which to instruct your faith ; with hymns and anthems of praise ; but above all, with the Eucharistic Feast, in which Mary's blessing may

become, in a measure, still your own. In that Sacrament, which is to every faithful soul the extension of the Incarnation, we too may say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Here we may have grace to recover lost innocence and retrieve those "years which the locust hath eaten." Here we may learn true sympathy from the sacred heart of our compassionate Redeemer ; here we may learn to hate sin. And if we ask, in our coldness and sadness of heart, as Christmas finds us still so dull and irresponsive, "My father . . . behold the fire and the wood : but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" the Church will answer out of her abounding faith, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering ;"¹ yes, even that "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

¹ Gen. xxii. 7, 8.

V

A REPEATED EFFORT

“And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”—ST. JOHN i. 36, 37.

THIS is the last time when, as far as we know, St. John ever saw our Lord ; that Master whom he so faithfully followed, that Saviour whom he so unflinchingly proclaimed, that Friend whom he loved with such whole-hearted devotion. Here he stands the eager forerunner, with his life-work almost done, in quiet, silent waiting, ready to hand over his band of adherents to their true and lawful Leader. And how little he had done ! But yesterday he stood to bear that testimony which contained the whole gospel for all ages. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And the Evangelist records no response, none of those eager throngs which wait upon modern revivals, of souls touched, if it be but for the moment, in sudden conviction of

generous enthusiasm. The preacher's testimony, as we say, fell flat ; but the next day he renews it, and as we are told no less a person than St. Andrew was the result of the repeated effort :¹ " One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." ² We clergy to whom God entrusts His message that we may proclaim it, are peculiarly liable to be disheartened. Empty churches and listless hearers are responsible for many extinct volcanoes, many quenched enthusiasms. It tries the mettle of a man to have to rally a failing cause, and retrieve a failure, or at least to repeat an effort. But this is a difficulty not peculiar to clergy, or to leaders of movements, or to prophets who can see over the heads of their fellow-men. The frequent call in the gospel to perseverance, the insistence on importunity even, in dealing with God, the frequent appeals to endure, to wait patiently, to look to the end, all show that it is in human nature to be easily disheartened, and to give in, and to mistake the want of immediate success for the failure which waits on a bad cause. Is it too much to build up such an inference on the silence of the Evangelist? If it be so, at least we all of us know the difficulty of a repeated effort, and New Year's Eve is upon us

¹ I am indebted for this thought to the Bishop of Lincoln.

² St. John i. 40.

with just this message, telling us to face our failures and renew our efforts and to test our powers of final perseverance.

I

This is a temptation which has been, and is, incident to the human race, to doubt the efficacy of God's message in the face of failure. Look at this tendency all down the ages. God's message is too strict we must relax it; God's message is too lax we must tighten it. The Christian must be strengthened and the basis of Christianity be widened by an admixture of the world's spirit; and quickly the fabric begins to totter, and the desert is filled with solitaries escaping from the falling house. The Church is not strict enough, the message is too lax, the tares must be rooted out from the wheat, the Church of Christ must gather in her net only good fish, the wedding invitation must on no account be extended to bad as well as good, and Donatism troubles the Church. Now it is the Renaissance, now it is the Reformation, now it is the revival in modern days of new forms of earnestness; and then the tendency to discard the old and try the new is irresistible; men have not faith to proclaim once more the old message, to make a repeated effort, and the

message of God is lost, His testimony is silenced, because men have attributed to it the failure of human imperfection or the weakness which belongs to its faithless proclamation by unworthy prophets. We do need more and more to feel that the Word of God has not lost its virtue, that the old proclamation of the gospel has still power to win many a St. Andrew, to attract what is best in the generous minds and aspirations around us.

We often allow ourselves, in a spirit of faithless pessimism, to deplore the degeneracy of the times in which we live ; but there certainly never was an age when more efforts were made for the reformation of society, for the alleviation of distress, for the cure of anomalies, and the eradication of various forms of social evil. More than this, there is visible a tenderness and refinement of benevolence, such as we see in the efforts made to make homes brighter, to cheer dull hours in the dreary surroundings of our less favoured fellow-creatures, to provide holidays for those who otherwise would have none, seaside camps, and country lodgings. Philanthropy waits at the door of the prison for the disgraced felon to help him up again. The very tramps are sought out and brought under civilizing influence ; and never perhaps has there been a greater care displayed for those lower animals who share with us the failure

branded on nature since the Fall. It is true that philanthropy and kindness may take the place of religion, but it is also true that religion which is worthy of the name must display itself in such acts of tenderness and love. But the point to be insisted on is this, that if many a cruel disappointment is to be avoided, and good work to be gathered up, we must have faith to repeat the old message, and bind all this generous love of man, and this tender sympathy to the personal devotion to God Incarnate, which is the consecration and the strength of all philanthropic effort. "Behold the Lamb of God." We must say it again, when we are taunted with wasting time in church-going, when others are devoting themselves to these graceful acts of mercy. "Behold the Lamb of God." We must say it again when they cast in our teeth our failures at home, as an Established Church, to reach the poor, our failures as Christians abroad to touch even the elementary principles of tenderness and humanity. "Behold the Lamb of God." We must have the courage to say it again and again, where civilization breaks down, and kindness is rejected, and the horrible brutality of human passion surges against the barriers of restraint, and sweep away the appeals which are made to the poetry and chivalry of human nature.

It is inevitable that the restlessness of the age

should be reflected in its schemes of benevolence, and in the constant trial of new methods, in face of the apparent failure of the old. But we, at all events in this generation, live sufficiently near to the time to remember, or at least to have heard about, those who now more than sixty years ago had the faith to make a repeated effort, and to see whether the faith which had subdued the Roman Empire, had civilized Europe, had been the nursing mother of art and music in some of their most beautiful developments, had lost anything of its ancient power. The Sacramental system which lay buried in our Prayer-book, the conception of the Church which had well-nigh died out, were brought forward again. And I need not repeat the oft-told tale of a revival which has passed over the whole Church of England, and has even touched those whose religious life lies outside of, and is in antagonism to, her influence. You remind me, that the very existence of the different civilizing and philanthropic agencies proves that this revival has spent itself, you point to the unbelief and indifference around us, which no one can deny, as an indication of failure, and of results utterly incompatible with the great position, establishment and endowment of the Church of England. I would point in answer to this scene which I have already described, and I would say that the

time has come when the Church too must have faith to make a repeated effort, and to say once more, "Behold the Lamb of God."—It is here, and not in strange cults and fantastic methods, that true and permanent relief is to come. Nothing is more remarkable than to notice how the great principles of God live on, and never change. How some of those old ceremonial enactments even, given by God to Moses centuries ago, whose immediate significance has passed away, still live on in principle as of first importance in dealing with mankind. Some of those very chapters which men shrink from, misuse, and style indelicate, contain principles which are of present value, in dealing with quite modern developments of sin. Necromancy, astrology, witchcraft, and all those things of which sometimes men have read with a contemptuous smile, suddenly shine out with a modern application which is quite startling. On this very day ¹ the Church commemorates how our Lord became "obedient to the Law for man," ² and entered on that life which claimed and exercised no exemption from the rites and ceremonies imposed on God's people of old. Himself, being prepared to exhibit, if I may say so with reverence, Christianity as a repeated effort

¹ The Feast of the Circumcision.

² Collect for the festival.

on the part of Almighty God, to help and elevate human nature, by means of grace, sacraments and ordinances, which, to use Hooker's phrase, the Church "has proportionable" ¹ to the ancient Law. Looking back over a long and troubled history, the Church has no reason to feel any sense of inherent failure in the Divine scheme vouchsafed to her. Whenever this repeated effort has been made, in all ages and in all countries, the religion of Jesus Christ has shown itself to be the power of God unto salvation, amidst the seductions of a refined civilization, or the barbarities of savage ignorance. The Sacraments have the same power to brace and form the Christian character in tropical Africa, as they have in educated England.

"Again the next day after John stood." I would venture to recall you to these words, and to say that if we are witnessing failure around us, and if the salt seems to have lost its savour, it is a call to many things, to penitence, humiliation, sorrow and shame. But above all, it is a call to fresh enterprise. There is yet balm in Gilead, there is still a Physician there, and still the health of the daughter of God's people may be recovered by a repeated effort.

¹ "Eccles. Pol.," V. lxxviii. § 2.

II

But New Year's Eve has to us a more personal message than this. It is impossible to forget that this recurring point of time appeals to some in a way in which some of the greatest anniversaries fail to do. And it is only wise to recognize this. It has been pointed out that "God, by nature alike and by grace, makes new beginnings the whole history of our being."¹ We shall only know at the Judgment Day the value of that new beginning which God gives us daily, by the very disposition of day and night, and the necessity of sleep. We can have no thought what we should lose, if we could dispense with sleep and prolong day into day, by the loss of new beginnings. "Every three years we have a thousand of such new beginnings. Then, still in their yearly dance, the seasons in their annual round of increase and decay; the years in their ever-increasing rapidity of whirling flight; the annual commemoration of God's individual mercies and judgments, the days of our birth, or of our re-birth in baptism, or those which are marked by the loss of friends—what is the one low chant of them all, but, "Time is ebbing, time is ebbing; when it has reached its last ebb,

¹ Dr. Pusey, "Eleven Addresses to the Companions of the Love of Jesus," p. 4.

no man can work.”¹ Surely St. John would call to us all to-night to make a repeated effort, and I would venture to emphasize this fact, that it will be found necessary again and again thus to repeat it. We do not start on a fated course, impelled by heredity and shaped by environment. The very Sacraments themselves, as we know full well, are no charm which act with mechanical accuracy. Holy Baptism merely puts us into a state of salvation, that is, a state in which we may be saved with perseverance and effort. Again and again the appeal is made to us to work together with God in working out our own salvation, “whosoever will be saved, before all things, it is necessary” that he keep what he has received. We may never look forward to a time when we can dispense with all this machinery of spiritual help, from a height of unruffled calm, where effort is neither necessary nor desirable. We thought the time would come when the ardour of youth had sunk down, and the dangerous flames would then subside into the steady glow of an even life of regulated desire, but middle life develops its own difficulties, and the area of effort is merely transferred to another region. Old age itself displays a power of crippling our spiritual activities ; while from behind

¹ Dr. Pusey, “Eleven Addresses to the Companions of the Love of Jesus,” p. 4.

the very curtains of death there spring forth those final temptations which may even at that last hour cause us, by reason of the pains of death, to fall away from the tender hand of a loving Saviour.

No ; New Year's Day makes a true appeal. It is only by effort, and by repeated effort, that we are going to emerge from the difficulties which beset us. You may have noticed the strange summons that is made to us by the Church every time we approach the altar : " Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins . . . and intend to lead a new life." Day by day, this is said to us, that there should be the constant determination to lead a new life. And it is only those who are in earnest who will be able to justify this language, for they know how it is only by the great rush of grace within, surging and bursting up, the stronger and the fuller for the obstacles which it encounters, that we are able to meet the new difficulties of a new day, with the new grace of a renewed strength. And therefore we make resolutions. Perhaps many of you have already made them, you have resolved that everything is to be different this new year—new life, new efforts, new earnestness ; only let me remind you of the dangers which belong to resolutions, as to so many other good and useful things. A man has not paid his debts when he has simply written down his liabilities on paper. A resolution

in itself has not yet matured into performance. And further, a hasty resolution may even do harm, if it is not carried out in due performance. A resolution unfulfilled, means that the will has given orders which are not obeyed, and that a mutiny has taken place in the lower desires and impulses in favour of inactive sloth, and so the delicate machinery of our complex life becomes damaged, and we have less spiritual and mental power when we would make yet another effort. Surely in this, as in everything else, we should be wise with ourselves and carefully measure what we are able to do, and do it. Every one, for instance, knows that he would be happier and better if he could cast away the sin which doth so easily beset him, that one fault which has made a breach in the walls of his spiritual life, and through which pour in all sorts of lesser and disabling imperfections. He has tried to persuade himself, but without success, that he is to this extent powerless in the matter, and he who would resent the imputation of not being a free man, is trying to acquiesce in the bondage of habit, on the miserable ground that he is surrounded with slaves, and one slave the more makes no difference. Here is the subject of a true and definite resolution for the coming year. Sin is unnatural, and has no business within the sacred enclosure of our life, and therefore it shall

be cast away by effort, renewed effort, repeated effort, until the day becomes the week, and the week the month, and the month the year, the happiest year we have ever seen, because it is the year of freedom. And allied with this is the good things which we mean to do, and have hitherto failed to do. Each year, like the sibyl of old time, comes with her rich treasures in her hand, each year she asks the same price for them, but each year she has less to give.

“Days of the Son of man” have come and gone; years when we might have known Him and seen Him are gone. That joy might have been shared with Him, that trouble might have been borne *in* Him, that temptation might have been avoided because of Him. And to-day He makes as though He would go further.¹ Let us constrain Him to enter in and stay with us. Let us say, “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”² This year we determine, by Thy grace, to do that good thing which we have hitherto failed to do. This year, once more, we make a repeated effort, and this time we may be able to bring to Thee a life fashioned according to Thy holy will.”

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 28.

² Ver. 29.

III

The old year that has passed has not been uneventful to us. If by God's great mercy we ourselves have been spared, as a nation, the horrors and suspense of war, such as that which overshadowed us only a few years since ; yet the air has been filled with turmoil and tumult, and the cries of pain and anguish in which a great European nation seems to be pushing her way towards liberty, with methods of horror and bloodshed which recall the awful scenes which disfigured France at the end of the eighteenth century. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,"¹ and no end, however desirable in itself, can justify on one side or the other, dastardly schemes of repression, or blood-stained methods of precipitating the inevitable. If God in His almighty wisdom can bring order out of chaos, and peace out of civil strife, let us beware lest we attribute to Him the sanction or the approval of such methods, in which the impatience of man tries to hurry forward the deliberate schemes of His beneficent counsel.

We cannot view with indifference the terrible conditions of a great Christian nation like Russia,

¹ St. James i. 20.

which has but changed a wrongly provoked war in the East for greater troubles at home ; and to whom the conclusion of the terms of peace, in which America played so honourable a part, during this past year has only precipitated the miseries of a country divided against itself.

We, too, have our troubles, in the recurring want and depression which the unsolved problem of life in our large towns tends to bring with it. Here, thank God, we may count on the great heart of the nation earnestly desiring to help, and to do what is right, which only tends to make more unworthy and ungenerous all violence and recrimination against those whose chief fault is thoughtlessness, and who themselves suffer as much as their poorer brethren from the miseries of unemployment, only in other ways. It is not without significance, that the somewhat rare distinction of a grave in this cathedral has been granted to a fellow-citizen whose claim to honour lay in his beneficence, so unceasingly exercised towards those who are growing up amidst all the temptations of our modern civilization.¹ He was but another example of that great band who, some more and some less, have accepted the apostolic precept, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."²

We enter on the New Year in all the excitement

¹ Sir George Williams.

² Galat. vi. 2.

of a general election. God grant that more and more questions may be removed out of the realm of party politics, and that there may be more anxiety to promote the general welfare of the country than to snatch party triumph. Such a question as the education of our children ought for ever to be removed from partisan warfare ; for it will be found in the long run that no other question is of such vast imperial importance as the bringing up in the full faith of Christ, those who are to hand on the traditions when we are dead and gone. God grant that the days have gone for ever, when political capital is sought to be made out of questions of Church government, or religious difficulty. We have enough common foes to meet, enough mutual burdens to bear, enough public difficulties to solve, without turning our arms one against another. There lies another year of blessing and of struggle before us, and if you seek a guide amidst the intricacies of its winding paths, listen once more to the voice of St. John pointing you to the true Leader of every earnest soul. " Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Hearing

VI

SERMONS

“For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”—ST. MATT. iii. 3.

ST. JOHN the Baptist seems to be brought before us in the Gospel as the typical preacher. And perhaps there is no part of the ministerial duty which is so much regarded by the average Englishman, so much criticized and so much demanded, as the sermon.

Hearing a sermon has become the sole religious duty of some people. “Preaching the gospel” is a phrase which in many cases has been pressed out of all meaning. As if there were a virtue in the mere reading of the doctor’s prescription; as if to study the sign-post were equivalent to an actual progress in the journey of life; as if the perpetual hearing of good advice, by those who remained stationary, were an equivalent to the hearing of the good news which impelled men to rise and seek for the blessings thus proclaimed to them.

“Ye shall call upon them to hear sermons,” is one of the first duties laid upon sponsors as to the future guidance of their infant godchildren. And certainly no Christian has any cause to complain, least of all the clergy, if people are disposed thus to display a readiness to be taught, a desire to hear the good news, and to place themselves under the guidance of those who are set over them in the Lord and admonish them.

A sermon in the service of the Holy Eucharist appears very early in the Christian Church. It is expressly mentioned by Justin Martyr in the second century.¹ Probably it became afterwards an exposition of the Gospel and Epistle. This is the only place, where a sermon is mentioned in our Prayer-book of to-day. But with the expansion of our needs, and the manifold calls and opportunities which lie before the preacher, not once or twice on Sunday, but frequently, as the occasion may require, is this ministry of preaching made use of for correction, for reproof, and instruction in righteousness, and has been sometimes, and might be always, a mighty engine for spreading the Truth, in not only building up the faithful in the lessons of righteousness, but also in bringing to Christ heathen as ignorant and as destitute of God's revealed grace as ever were those who

¹ Justin Martyr, “Apol.,” i. 67.

confronted St. Augustine when he landed on the shore of Thanet to bring to our English forefathers the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Doubtless, many in this congregation have read, perhaps some have contributed to, the controversial literature which from time to time crops up about sermons. It is easy to criticize the preacher, to denounce his shallowness, his unpreparedness, his unreadiness, his want of rhetorical skill, his dullness, his repetition, his brevity, or his length. It is easy to set down on paper the sort of sermon we want, and the sort of sermon we dislike. Perhaps we are suffering now from one of those periodical and inevitable revolutions of fashion, in which an irreverent age delights, when it hastens to reverse with a startling freedom the opinions of the age which immediately preceded its own, or to plunge from an excess of veneration on the one hand into a defect of respect on the other.

If sermons are not on a level with Sacraments—as they are not—still, as the deliberate utterance of those who are called to be the forerunners of God, they ought to be treated with respect. And a man must not consider that he has received “with meekness the engrafted Word,” if he returns home merely to criticize, refute, and disparage the preacher through whom it has been conveyed.

You will notice that the Baptist’s words are a

sharp call to a dutiful response on the part of those who listened to his sermon. It is true that he was sent into the wilderness, before the face of the Lord, to prepare God's ways. But his cry is here, to the people, to those who flocked to hear him, to those who listened to his words, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

Surely there is a duty which belongs to those who hear sermons as well as to those who preach them. Surely, if the preacher must say, as he fixes his eyes upon God, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"¹ as he fixes his eyes on the people he can only say, "Take heed therefore how ye hear."²

I

For a sermon is first of all a message from God. It is sometimes difficult, I know, to believe this, when the utterance is feeble and unworthy, when it is a manifest display of self, or even when doctrines are enunciated which it would be a peril to the soul to follow. Our Blessed Lord seems to have stated the principle of dealing with this difficulty when He said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;

¹ I Cor. ix. 16.

² St. Luke viii. 18.

but do not ye after their works ; for they say and do not.”¹ That is, “ In so far as the Pharisees and scribes enforce the Law and precepts of Moses, obey them ; but imitate not their conduct.” We should indeed be in a spiritual difficulty if we felt ourselves bound to carry out the precepts of every sermon. But as the duty of honouring our parents is never more conspicuously beautiful than when it is displayed towards a dishonourable, unkind, or brutal parent ; so Christian reverence is never more beautiful than when it is displayed in the face of what is unworthy, of what must be received even with protest from those who are set over us in the Lord. The most successful sermon ever recorded is the one brief deep cry of woe of the Prophet Jonah, “ Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”² It carried with it the conversion of a city. There have been times, as here in the case of St. John Baptist, where the dignity of the message surpassed and swallowed up the personality of the messenger ; just as there have been times when the messenger seems to have strangled the message by his own obtrusive personality.

There have not been wanting examples of great men who steadily resisted the evening criticism of the Sunday sermon. And here the support of the laity is a great help. Where there

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

² Jonah iii. 4.

is a sort of understanding between priest and people, which says, "If you just say something of the usual length which does not offend us, or jar upon our taste, or have the appearance of dictating to us, we will listen to you. If not, our remedy is simple,"—what, in circumstances like these, can they expect but a dead perfunctory enunciation of platitudes from a man who must say something? But if, on the other hand, they say, "We have to labour much in other parts of God's vineyard, we have not the time for special study of these questions; you have studied them, you are there to teach us; we look to you to guide us, while we reserve to ourselves the verification of our own reading, and the obedience to the authoritative teaching of the Church,"—here a man is encouraged to do his best. Certainly it is not fair to put the blame all on one side. However unworthy or perfunctory the address from the pulpit may be, every preacher and speaker knows the force of that moral confidence which mounts up from the people to the preacher, and which impresses him to deliver God's message to those who wish to hear it, instead of an essay to those who wish to criticize it and tear in pieces, or most of all, wish him to hold his tongue, and in this way it may often happen that the sermon may be unpalatable. The Sanhedrin disliked intensely the message of

God as it came from St. Stephen's lips. It ended in his martyrdom. The Pharisees and Sadducees who came to St. John's baptism only met with a stern repulse. There is many a preacher of whom people say, as Ahab said of Micaiah, "I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."¹ A humble and teachable mind will extract some good even from the worst sermon, if it be only "patience" which George Herbert found as a Pandora's legacy, at the bottom of the box, which had contained only a mass of senseless evil. Perhaps it is almost the most satisfactory comment which can be passed on any ministry which Louis XIV. is said to have addressed to Massillon: "My father, I have listened to many preachers in my chapel, and I have been mightily pleased with them. As for you, as often as I have listened to you, I have been very displeased with myself."

II

And this brings us to a second consideration, which is this, that the test of a good sermon is not its eloquence, but its helpfulness. What does it lead me to do? Many a person goes home and says, "I have heard a beautiful sermon to-day." What has it led him to do? Perhaps, like the forgetful

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 8.

hearer in the Epistle of St. James, he has just seen his natural face in the glass ; the sermon has held up to him a mirror, in which he has caught sight of some features in his life or in the life of others. He has looked and gone away, not a soil is removed, not a hair straightened, not a mark of sickness noted, not a ravage of time considered. He goes his way, and remains as he was before, pleased by a glance at a casual mirror, which has flattered him by an exhibition of himself, confirming him in what he thought before, reassuring him in what he likes, and with no disagreeable suggestion of possible consequences.¹ He may even have listened as the people did to Herod, and have given the unhappy man another thrust downwards into the pit of flattery, as he joined in the chorus, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."² But the test of the message having got home is this : What has it led me to do ?

St. John Baptist's voice here comes to our aid : "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." It is the message of every sermon. There is the way of the Lord to be carried over this age in which we are called upon to live. In past ages it had been carried along with difficulty over the opposing paganism of hostile tribes, who descended with shouts and violence, and tore up the path, and killed those who

¹ St. James i. 23, 24.

² Acts xii. 22.

were sent unto them. Afterwards the little track expanded into the open valley of public patronage, and had to be lifted up on high, above the defiling dangers and soft morasses of a false life, sapping the foundations of vital doctrine. At one time the elevations of superstition have had to be brought low, the rough places of evil living to be made smooth, the dead wastes of apathetic atheism to be bridged over. And here the way of the Lord lies across this wonderful century, with its activities, its research, its marvellous triumphs all around us. It is no light matter to carry the way of the Lord over these. At one time the supposed opposition between faith and science has to be smoothed. At another the claims of an advanced civilization have to be brought in to form a pavement of tessellated beauty for the King's highway; or the demands of God's worship and God's commandments have had to be advanced over a vigorous self-asserting independence; or the claim to an absolute irresponsible use of wealth to be adjusted to the requirements of God's imperial projects. The sin of the age, whatever it may be, has to be grappled with, and that by the ordinary congregations who listen to sermons. Is it true that the royal road is blocked, more than anything else, by the spirit of irreverence, which questions authority, despises tradition, and asserts a merely aggressive individualism?

The way of the Lord does not lie on one side of all the great questions of the day. It lies right through them ; it must be carried over them. We want for God all those strong intellects and men of science. We want for God all that resource of strength, which in improving the world has been improving God's heritage. We want that independent spirit which does not shrink from great and difficult actions, or merely sit upon the banks watching the flow of the tide of life which it feels itself hopeless either to direct or to stem. We want even the energy which is being spent in sin and folly. What influence have our great congregations on the building of the King's highway ? Do they make themselves felt, or are they merely aggregations of individuals, who use the church as a public oratory or a Sunday lecture-room ? To have heard even the portion of Scripture read to us to-day has given us a responsibility to the world outside. St. John Baptist's words still ring on, echoing through the ages, explain them and adulterate them as we will ; and they are these : That no man has done his duty to his God, or ever profited by a sermon, or made the most of his opportunities, if he has not done something to prepare the way of the Lord across the age in which his lot is cast, by the life which he lives, the words which he utters, the ideal which he carries out, as an instructed servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this way of God passes always in front, so to speak, of our own door. There it is in the circle in which we move, the profession which we follow, the calling to which we have answered. So the different professions, as they passed under the Baptist's teaching, all asked, "What shall we do?"¹ The people generally, those who simply passed their days in the struggle for existence, too often careless of others' happiness, and heedless of others' woes,—they were to be reminded of those who had no coat at all where they had a superfluity, and no food where they had sufficient. The way of God must not be confused with a bright path for a happy few, but must spread out all around in a wide and equable sympathy. The publicans must not accept the baptism of repentance, and be publicans as they were before; there was no reason why "publican" and "sinner" should be synonymous terms; they had to carry the way of the Lord through their profession, not outside it. And by simply exacting no more than was appointed them, to show what baptized publicans could do, who brought their profession up into the way of God.

Even the soldiers, rough and tempted as they were, need not leave their profession to prepare the way of the Lord. Simply to renounce their

¹ St. Luke iii. 12.

deeds of violence and oppression, and to practise contentment, would help to purify their profession, and a good soldier might become the pioneer of Christ. In a book which was much read during the last century, and which is now once more presented to our modern readers as a call to a devout and holy life,¹ the writer complains of the serious divorce between profession and practice. Public worship, on Sundays and in many places daily, was better attended, perhaps, than even now; but the lives and conversation of the worshippers were strangely inconsistent with their profession: not that they were conscious hypocrites, but they pleaded human weakness. But the question is, What is the intention of our life? Do we really intend in all things to follow the will of God? If so, when we break down then we may plead human frailty. But instead of striving to live in a way which God will certainly reward, men are content, instead, to live in such ways as, for aught they know, God will pardon.

We need to carry the way of God right through our lives. You know how encroachments are made on some piece of public, common land. Once it was for the benefit of all; the rich and the poor had equal rights in it; it was the common pasture, the common playground, the common

¹ Law's "Serious Call."

lung of health, the common pride ; and then avarice impels the village Ahab to enclose here and enclose there ; and the way goes by, and not through, the bright open space. It is a terrible thing when any one begins to fence off any part of his life from the free and full ownership of God. When a man puts, for instance, a ring fence round his business life, and determines to shut it off from the ordinary principles which regulate his everyday undertakings ; when he allows himself to follow one sort of morality in his business, and another in his private dealings with his friends ; when he allows himself to think that fair in the matter of a bargain which would be dishonourable as between man and man. It is a terrible thing when a man puts a ring fence round what he calls his pleasures, and does not attempt to regulate them either by a sense of religion or a sense of duty, until religion is reduced to an affair of Sundays, a diminishing path, which is more and more grudging and more and more curtailed. First here and then there the right of way for religion is stopped, in this direction and in that, until that which was once the bright expanse of an innocent, good life is separated off into fenced inconsistencies, and a muddy unfrequented lane represents the great highway of the Lord.

Listen to the preacher of the wilderness, as

he bids you prepare here the way of the Lord, God's way right through the profession, and God's way right through the soul—every part of it. Not far from St. Paul's, in the days of the Stuarts, was that strange anomaly in a civilized city, Alsatia, as it was called—the district in which the king's writ did not run—a devil's sanctuary, in which crime was safe. It is only too easy to set up an Alsatia within our own soul, with well-defined limits and well-ascertained privileges—sins which are never disturbed, habits which we never mean to alter, things done which we never mean not to do, things left undone which we never intend to do. The sermon is not composed which will take down those barriers. Religion goes outside it altogether. But the Baptist's cry reaches here too. God wants all the life; the way of God must pass through every valley, even the darkest and the most depressed. "Take heed therefore how ye hear." Sermons may be an intellectual anodyne, and a spiritual injury, if, while we turn our backs on those shut-off regions of permitted sin, we say, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are";¹ while we ostentatiously repine at the powerful exhibition of the mote which disfigures our brother's eye, forgetful of the malignant beam which challenges the wrath of God, in our own eye.

¹ St. Luke xviii. 11.

III

The preacher of righteousness, if he does anything, is to bring home conviction to the individual soul; to resolve doubts which arise from time to time; to clear up the difficulties of the path; to point to Christ; to warn, to reprove, instruct; to be a constant guide, as the journey goes on and the road expands over the opening centuries with their ever-changing aspect. There is no doubt whatever that as the hearing of sermons is abused and wasted, so there is a tremendous disproportion between the advice given and the advice followed. Think only of the two or even three sermons which are preached to-day in every church in England. Think of all the sermons you have heard, the advice you have received, both from sermons you have heard and sermons you have selected to read, as being good for your souls' health and suitable for your souls' needs! What is the reason of the strangely inadequate result? Is the fault all on the side of the preacher? "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." It is quite possible to limit our range, and stop the intensity and deflect the course of our religious apprehension, if we are not careful.

For instance, why is it that people are incapable apparently of assimilating certain parts of the Truth? Why is it that it is almost impossible to

treat of certain aspects of the Truth? Is it not true that we allow ourselves to neglect the terminology, the language of faith, so that much that is said to us seems to be unintelligible? It is astonishing to find how, among other injuries which controversy has inflicted on us, it has done this—it has labelled, as it were, large tracts of the Truth as dangerous, and we scud along our way dexterously avoiding them, afraid of controversy, afraid of heresy, afraid, as we say, of party spirit. It is so easy to clap a series of labels over certain aspects of the Truth, and refuse even to look beneath them. On one side one will be saying, “I am not going to listen to that; it is the superstitious advice of a Romanist;” on the other, one is saying, “I certainly shall not attend to that; it is the strait-laced narrowness of a Methodist.” It is easy to clap “Transubstantiation” as a label over the Eucharistic doctrine of the Church; or “the Confessional” over repentance; or “Purgatory” over the doctrine of the intermediate state; or “Sacerdotalism” over the Christian ministry; or “Revivalism” over personal appeals; or “Calvinism” over the contemplation of the four last things; or “Puritanism” over an exhortation to strictness of life. Certainly an educated Christian ought not to be taken in by names, or think that a doctrine is to be avoided or an exhortation slighted because some one has

labelled it "Dangerous." Ought we not as Church-people to study more the clear, definite proportions of the Faith, to know our terms better, to be more perfectly instructed, to remember the agonized trials which gave us the Creeds, and the long and patient investigations of truth which have been the glory of theology? Certainly a preacher has but little chance if his hearers think that they can demolish whole centuries of tabulated results by a label, or reject the labour of a lifetime in a word; for, remember, it is also possible to limit our apprehension by dislike. It is a fact, I suppose, which few will care to deny, that there are certain things which we hear in sermons which we do not wish to be true.

Faith makes such gigantic demands upon us, that we feel we must meet it at least with a determination to maintain our own rights. "Suppose it were really true that God wants a tithe of my time and a tithe of my money! Suppose it were really true that I ought to fast! Suppose it were really true that God wants me to be confirmed and become a communicant! Suppose it were really true that my preparation for Communion ought to be a much more earnest thing than it is, that there ought to be self-examination, confession of sins, restitution, amendment, the hand of faith, the heart of love, and the hope of meeting Christ! Suppose I really ought

to go to church twice every Sunday at least, and say my prayers and read my Bible! Ah! it is easy. That is the word I wanted: 'Pharisaism.' Of course, this is not true. It is much better not even to think about it. I think, on the whole, I prefer a sermon on sanitation or the extension of the franchise. I will never hear that man again." Is it not true that as a man who dislikes parting with his money will eagerly scan the list to which his position obliges him to contribute, to find out what is the least possible sum that a man like him can give, so there are many asking, "What is the least thing that I can do? What will suffice, what is the barest minimum which will prevent me from being uncomfortable, or my friends from thinking me an irreligious man?" There is always a terrible danger of settling down into a state where we expect our preachers just to say things which they are told to say, and on no account to do anything to ruffle the deadly calm. To settle down into a state of æsthetic churches—mere choral services, graceful essays, invertebrate theology, easy-going fasting, meaningless terms, and a general eclecticism. Take care. What "I like" is a very poor substitute for that grand apostolic term, "the proportion of faith."¹

And I have left to the last that which underlaid the constant and earnest call to repentance—that

¹ Rom. xii. 6.

there is nothing which so stops the receptivity of the hearer, nothing which so bars the fulness of faith, as a moral deafness, a moral short-sightedness, a moral obliquity of vision. These are words of far-reaching importance spoken by our Blessed Lord : " Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God." ¹ There was a bar to the message of God in the profane house of Eli. When God would speak, only the child Samuel could hear. ² David seemed to have lost all sense of moral fitness, of justice, tenderness, and heroism, under the deadening influence of sin, and he was absolutely deaf to Nathan's sermon, until it was driven home to him in a way which he could not dispute. ³ Saul is driven to necromancy and magic in the blackness of spiritual darkness. ⁴ Balaam becomes a tinkling cymbal under the influence of Balak's bribery. ⁵ The generous sacrifice of the loving woman becomes absolutely maddening to covetous Judas. ⁶ It is an awful thing to blind our receptivity, to have the eye, in Scripture language, so full of the adulteress, ⁷ as to be unable to discern the true, the beautiful, and the good ; to dabble in doubtful things, and to blunt our susceptibilities with error, until we become incapable of discerning between truth and

¹ St. Matt. v. 8.

² 1 Sam. iii.

³ 2 Sam. xii. 7.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxviii.

⁵ Numbers xxii.

⁶ St. John xii. 4.

⁷ 2 St. Pet. ii. 14.

falsehood ; to look at truth with envious eye, until we become blinded by our own carelessness, and unable to see its beauty. Guard against that earth-born cloud which hides our Saviour from our sight ; and keep clear the bright surface which is to reflect the image of Jesus Christ. The sinner, the wilful sinner, hears no sermons. It does not touch him. It is foolishness to him, he cannot understand why people should trouble their heads about such matters. The seed falls on an absolute rock, and the Word does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it. It would be a good thing sometimes, dear brethren, if the hearers of sermons would take the criticism on themselves. It is a sad thing to hear and not to do ; it is a sad thing not to hear at all. It is a sad thing to hear and reject. If it be true, as Dean Church said, that one of the things which a preacher will least like to meet at the day of judgment will be his own sermons,¹ it may also be true that one of the saddest things which will then befall the ordinary listener will be the sad condemnation of the prophet : " This is the refreshing : yet they would not hear." ²

¹ " Cathedral and University Sermons," p. 210.

² Is. xxviii. 12.

VII

FAITH AND LIFE

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”—
ROM. x. 10.

I

“PROGRESS” and “knowledge,” these are two words to conjure with at the present day.

The motors, the machines, the trains, the steamships, as they bring men along from place to place, are the outward visible signs of a restlessness within, which cannot endure to stay still. While Science has penetrated to our very toys, our food, our clothing, our homes, and is now rapping importunately at the doors of our Church, asking us to bring out our mysteries, our Creeds, our Bibles, our old-world traditions, that a scientific age may make short work of them, and build up the highway of progress with fragments plucked from our temples and statues ravished from their shrines.

And yet this stream of progress is brought up sharply by the barrier which none can pass—

known as death. And this knowledge falls back baffled before the incalculable, which has a way of making its presence felt, the unknowable, which has a tendency to assert itself, and the undemonstrable, which, however, cannot be avoided. Do we not feel that, in spite of health and spirits, good company, and every facility of locomotion, we have to reckon with a large margin of uncertainty, which seems to be decided, however, by a strange precision? An unforeseen accident, a bout of illness, the death of a friend, a sudden loss—any or all of these things may arrest our happiness at any moment. And so a man otherwise irreligious feels like the Athenian of old, that it is a good policy to erect an altar “to the unknown God.” He puts D.V. on his letters, and when he does not need Sunday for other purposes he goes to church, even says prayers, perhaps reads a verse or two out of the Bible. He cannot shake off the feeling that he is being watched; he is like a traveller in a suspicious and tyrannical country. He cannot shake off the feeling that his every movement is made the subject of calculation, that he may be suddenly arrested, even put to death. Even if the telescope sweeps the heavens and cannot find God, even if the surgeon’s knife dissects the inmost recesses of the body and cannot find a soul—still it is safer not to break with religion, it is safer to erect

that altar to the unknown God : " O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul."

And yet, is there not something more gratifying than this ? Is there not a time when the ordinary activities of the world cease to satisfy ? Is progress for ever to be barred by the grave ? Or this great unknowable (as it would seem) simply to be labelled off as chance, or luck, or providence, or even God, as the scale of my appreciation rises ?

There is a field of service where few labour, a region of experiment where there is endless progress, where we can travel and never weary, see and never be satisfied with seeing, hear and never be sated with hearing,—and that is religion.

Religion, which will not be satisfied by the altar erected by the provident coward, who thinks well to conciliate an unknown and possibly a malignant power ; religion, which will not be satisfied with a Sunday niche, or a daily nook, but which frankly claims every day and all day, every part of our life, which sits at our dinner-table, watches over our bed, guides our conversation, handles our money, shares our holidays, and directs our business, a religion which is coterminous with life itself.

This is the only religion worth having. A Sunday religion is a miserable thing, and makes Sunday the most wretched day of the week. A five-minutes-a-day religion deceives a man into thinking

that he knows something about religion, when he knows nothing.

Religion has many definitions, but for our practical purpose to-day it is to know God. And if you only see God passing by on Sunday, if only you know Him as somebody to be afraid of, and who must have His little share of time and attention, then you are very much to be pitied.

Fancy spending all our time on other things when we might know God !

St. Paul felt really sorry for those clever men at Athens, their statues and their temples, their learning and their civilization, when he saw that poor altar. The recognition of One whom they were afraid to forget—"to the unknown God." And so he said, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."¹

II

Now, the one thing in life for us which is important, is that we should know God. Here is the secret of all happiness, the secret of all progress ; this is the end of all this human restlessness, this will even survive death. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."² It is wonderful to notice how human nature reaches

¹ Acts xvii. 23.

² St. John xvii. 3.

out after God ; in everything which has appealed to his sense of awe, or his fear, or his love, or his desire, man has pressed on to try and find God behind it. Now it is the beautiful world, with its marvellous order and its unfailing laws, which has appealed to him. God is there kindling the fiery beams of the sun, or spreading abroad the gentle rays of the moon. The wind is the breath of His nostrils, the clouds are the changing vesture which clothe and vest His magnificence, the thunder is the roll of His chariots, the lightning the flash of His glittering spear. His voice murmurs in the rustle of the leaves, the splash of the fountain, and the roar of the sea. The earth to the Greek was full of God ; but imagination, which was the creature of the brain, was a poor substitute for faith, which is a gift of God. And the eye became dim with human vice, and the ear deaf with the grossness of human desire, and that which was to be known of God died away, and men became encased in materialism, and empire after empire, and kingdom after kingdom died away, stifled in that close atmosphere where God had ceased to be looked for, and therefore had ceased to be found.

It is a dreary world where God is not. There is many a young life in London to-day which has scientifically tried to forget Him, which has turned its back on prayer, and worship, and Bible, and all

those consecrated places where God walked in the cool of the garden, in the happy days of their childhood. And they are waking up to find the savage tyranny of the Babylonian captivity of sin—where God is not. By the waters of Babylon they sit down and weep, when they remember Sion.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”¹ I believe that here in London these words have still their power, if only men would stay to hear them. Rest for this restless age, ever seeking, never finding. Peace for this turmoil, wherein men cannot sit still, and cannot find because they cannot sit still. God is what we want. He who could call back religion to London would be honoured as a benefactor of the race. Thirty years ago we threw it away as an integral part of our education. And now we are endeavouring to say in our loneliness “It does not matter.” Scour and search, and criticize, investigate, observe, compare, study, and you will find truth, and truth will make you happy. But men come back gaunt and tired, and say, Where is God? “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.”²

¹ St. Matt. xi. 29.

² St. John xx. 13.

III

We Christians claim to know God in a completeness and certainty such as no heathen religion can claim. God to us is not the end of a series of experiments, but He is the object of a revelation. Mark the word, it is a significant one. We claim that God Himself has drawn back the veil which hides His presence, and at certain periods has given names to Himself, that we might know more about Him; has opened up certain regions of His works and explained them, so that we may see how He works. Nay more, has come Himself to teach us the right and the true way, in order that we might walk in it, and that our joy might be full. You know how, with not a little insincerity, England has chosen to believe that she is one of the few nations which has an open Bible, while at the same time she ignores its teaching; and now, through some of her teachers, is actively engaged either in expurgating it, or deriding it, or indeed energetically repudiating it. Certainly, if we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, if we believe that Jesus Christ is the very and eternal God, we are landed in a position of immense responsibility. We never attempt to dispute the laws of science, although perhaps we ourselves

could not prove them; we accept them on the testimony of those who know, and who can explain their method of proof to those who can understand them. In the same way, the revelation of God, which the Church hands down as a sacred deposit, does not come to us as a matter of opinion, or a view which one man may hold and another may reject, but comes to us as a system of necessary truth on a firm dogmatic basis, which God has put before us, and has commanded His Church to keep ever before us as a most solemn trust which He has committed to them.

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”¹

If we ask why God should make this revelation, or why He has made it, there would seem to be two answers: (1) That it is to gratify that highest of all longings, the longing to know, the longing after truth. We have seen already how the world has been holding out hands to God, feeling after Him, like one groping in the dark; and God has been willing to meet that longing and to reveal Himself. Read the writings of those who

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 (R.V.).

have spent their days in communing with God, or of those who have bent all their powers of mind and soul to find Him. Read the beautiful lives of the saints, who have counted all but loss that they might find Christ. Theology, the science of God, is still the queen of sciences. The fear of God is still the beginning of wisdom. We shall learn in time that education without religion is like building a house from which the sun is excluded. We may thank God daily that He has been willing to reveal Himself, for the knowledge of God in itself and for itself is a treasure. (2) But the revelation of God was for another purpose beside this, it was to aid us, and to show us where help might be found in the most difficult journey which a man can take, the journey through time to eternity. We take a long time in realizing how difficult this journey is. Although every shore is strewn with shipwrecks, and every road littered with disaster, we still affect to believe that man carries within himself the secret of his own success, and the power of safe adventure through the tortuous passages of life. Do we not teach our children useful knowledge, and then shut our eyes to their subsequent failure? Do we not say that a system of undenominational ethics will suffice for any journey, however perilous, and keep a man straight amid the most adverse surroundings? In fact, we firmly believe, as a matter-of-course

experience, that to know what is right is to do it ; whereas, in sober fact, the testimony of experience is the other way. There are hundreds and thousands of men in London to-day who know perfectly well the elementary formula that "honesty is the best policy," who yet are bringing down upon themselves the lifelong degradation of a dishonest act, because they believe that their case is to prove the exception to the general fate of that singularly immoral proverb. There are hundreds and thousands of men in London to-night who know that the sensualist is his own enemy, who are yet powerless in the grip of temptation. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* is as true now as when it was first written.

No, the knowledge which God gives, is not the abstract knowledge of good and evil and of the broad and narrow way ; it is of Himself as the Way to overcome evil, of Himself as the Truth, as the means of overmastering error, of Himself as the Life, as the means to escape the power of death. And hence the Church has formulated those truths about God, which every Christian ought to know and believe, in the Creed, drawing on the resources of her traditions, drawing on those unwritten instructions which Christ left to the Church, and drawing on those records of the Bible which the Church has gathered together for our guidance and help.

And so we find ourselves in possession of those priceless documents, the Creeds. Not so much useful information on abstract and difficult subjects, but the proclamation of the way of safety to those who are called by God to be inheritors of His promises. The Creeds of the Church are three, not three faiths, but one faith variously stated. Our Baptism Creed, the Apostles' Creed, states in the simplest possible language all that a Christian man ought to know and believe to his soul's health. The Eucharistic Creed, the Nicene Creed, like the pearl in the shell of the oyster, is the beautiful product of early heresies which began to disturb the Church, more especially the heresy of Arianism, which has such a terrible fascination in various forms for human nature, which is willing to recognize the Lord as Divine, but with intellectual indolence hesitates to assert that He is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, being of one substance with the Father." While the Athanasian Creed again, although witnessing to the same faith, expands and explains under the pressure of further developments of unbelief with reference to our Blessed Lord's Person, with a clear exposition of what underlies all the Creeds, namely, the great importance of a right faith, the extreme importance of listening where God has spoken, of avoiding those roads which God has forbidden, of

accepting those helps which He has provided, of not only knowing the way of safety, but of persevering in it to the end.

We all must be aware that this is a point on which men are disposed to quarrel with the Church. There is a great dislike to asserting that one road is more right than another, and more especially to any warnings which threaten disagreeable consequences to those who wander from the right path. It would be much better, we are told, if we just asserted the truth and left alone the consequences of error. But it is just at this point that all I have tried to say about revelation comes in. We are told in God's Holy Word the necessary facts which concern our salvation, but we are also told how these facts are to be proclaimed, namely, with warnings, with almost threats, with the proclamation of God's wrath on those who neglect them.

You must not blame the Creed, you must blame the Bible. "The New Testament," says Dean Church, "is a very severe book as well as a very helpful one." Think only of what is meant by the word "Saviour." He is your Master, your Teacher it may be ; do you realize what is meant by calling Him your Saviour? And if you will read the New Testament you will see that not only wrong doing but wrong believing is the subject of some of God's most terrible warnings. In fact, in one place our

Lord Himself says, of a wrong-doer, that he will have his portion with the unbelievers.¹

We have now for so long feared to face this side of God's teaching, that the statements of the Creeds seem stern and bare and unsupported by current language.

But there it is. God has never apologized for it, has never withdrawn it. Just as He punishes the drunkard and the sensualist in this life with punishments which we might say were disproportionate to the offence, still He punishes and does not apologize; still He warns and does not withdraw. Whatever Christ meant by "perish," the Creed means too; whatever Christ meant by "these shall go away into everlasting punishment,"² the Creed means too. It is the height of presumption to withdraw them, it is folly to explain them. We do not know, we cannot know. But there is the penalty, the unknown penalty, affixed to wrong doing and wrong believing. And he is no benefactor to the race who puts out the lights, takes up the buoys, dismisses the pilots, and destroys the marks which indicate sunken shoals, in the entrance to the dangerous harbour. No doubt they fetter freedom of action, no doubt at times the skilful mariner can afford to do without them; but for all that, liberty to go wrong and

¹ St. Luke xii. 46.

² St. Matt. xxv. 46.

liberty to perish are poor substitutes for that restraint which is freedom and that obedience which is salvation.

IV

Day by day, human experience justifies these warnings. "Believe, and thou shalt be saved" is a common maxim of everyday prudence.

We are being told by the highest scientific authorities in matters of purely scientific and material experiment that the English people is degenerating, more especially from causes which are sapping the vitality of the race. And what has set these causes in motion in a deadly stream of contagious degeneration? It is the absence of belief in God as the Father of our nature. A man forgets that he has come into the world with duties to a Father in heaven, and he becomes absolutely selfish; he lives for himself, for ease, for comfort, for luxury, and he gets caught in the sensual trap which his own desires have laid for him. When temptation beats upon him in all its force, he has no knowledge of a Saviour. He was not allowed to be taught those things at school; the distinctive tenets of Christianity were denounced, and he must be kept from them. And in the hour of trial he knows not where to go,

So the knowledge of the Holy Ghost, in His grace at Baptism, in His strength at Confirmation, in His sacramental power, has been kept from him. And because he does not know the Faith, he passes through this world only half a man; his spiritual side has perished; he has no outlook beyond eating and drinking and then dying, in the unblessed struggle for existence, and the unequal combat with foes who are too strong for him.

The Creeds are the very charter of our existence, and the penalty for neglecting the warnings is the same, whether it is expressed or not.

One doctor may give his patient a remedy without a single word more than the injunction to use it; while another doctor may say of the same remedy, "Unless you use it, you will undoubtedly die." The first implied that, by giving the one remedy which was absolutely essential to recovery. So it seems a simple thing to say, "I believe in God the Father, who made me; God the Son, who redeemed me; God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified me"; but underneath those simple truths is contained implicitly all the awful warnings which belong to their neglect.

Let us thank God who has made known to us the way of salvation. Let us thank Him also in that He has warned us of the perils of neglect.

He is the kind Father who lavishes on us the

blessings of His bounty. He is also our tender Father who loves us too much not to warn.

A right belief lies at the bottom of a right life, and it is a matter of vital importance not merely to be acquainted with orthodox views, but to know and confess and shape our life by that which God has pointed out to us as the way of salvation.

VIII

THE BELIEF IN GOD THE FATHER

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”—1 ST. JOHN iii. 1.

I

WHEN the little child is given back at the font into the hands of his godparents with the Baptismal dew still fresh on his brow, it is with the understanding that he is pledged, not only to be a good man and to keep from evil, but also to be a believer. Again, when now growing up into conscious manhood, with all the perils of opening youth pressing upon him, he seeks the grace of God in Confirmation, once more he is required to pledge himself to be a believer. Each time we come here to church, for sacrament, for worship, or for prayer, again we have to pledge our faith in God. And at that solemn moment when the soul lies trembling at the gate of death, now about to depart from the body, the Church, in view of the account to be given to the righteous Judge, says,

through the mouth of God's priest, "Therefore I shall rehearse to you the articles of our Faith, that you may know whether you do believe as a Christian man should, or no."¹

Who told us that it is of no sort of importance what a man believes, as long as he is in earnest? Where is it ever stated in the Bible or Prayer-book, "This is the Catholic Faith, but whether a man believes it or not is a matter of supreme indifference"? No man has come back from the other world to tell us that we are being deluded by a sacerdotal scare which does not belong to fundamental Christianity. No one has come back to say, "The interpretation put upon the stern words of the New Testament is a wrong one: The road to heaven is easy, and the gate is wide; I was asked what I had done, not what I had believed."

'For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.'²

Without for one moment claiming to have a wider vision or power of insight than other people, without pretending to dogmatize on that which is still so mysterious and awful, it is yet well to insist on two things, which are these: (1) That a right life depends more than we care to think on a right faith; and (2) that if we will take

¹ Prayer-book: The Visitation of the Sick.

² Pope, "Essay on Man," iii. 306.

this world only, which we see and know around us, with its open book of experience, we shall find it written there, nay, stamped in letters of fire, "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith." Now, to-day, I only wish to take the first of these three portions into which the Creed is divided, and try to show that it is necessary to our right doing and to our salvation here in this world, that we should believe in God the Father, who made us and all the world. "I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth," is not, I would maintain, the assertion of a dry and abstract theological fact, but it is the assertion of a principle of life; it means that I am one of those who go through life believing that God is my Father, and that I have filial duties towards Him. Without this belief I shall lose something of the fulness and soundness of my life; I shall be less a man than I should be if I did believe it, and to this extent I shall not have kept part of my inheritance; to this extent in this world I shall have parted with my full endowment of blessing; to this extent I shall have perished.

Here at once I anticipate an objection, which says, "You prove too much. Do you mean to assert that those who unhappily cannot accept a full belief in God, who own neither Creed nor Bible, and who worship dimly an unknown God, are not often as

good men, nay, far better than many of those who frequent the church and are loud in their profession of faith and in their attachment to the Scriptures?"

I should like to be able to put this on one side, and once for all. We have no means of judging of these great exceptions which God deals with each in His own good way, and with a perfect knowledge of their circumstances and opportunities. Instances are not wanting where men and women have lived in the full enjoyment of health, and in full possession of their faculties, to a great age, but in complete defiance of many of the laws of health, utterly ignoring many of the sanitary rules that are laid down by competent authority; but we do not henceforth say that all sanitary rules are indifferent; and, further, it is always a matter which has to be proved, whether the good man would not have been a better man still had he been a believer; whether there would not have then been added to him supernatural virtues over and above those which are natural—that is to say, it remains to be proved whether he too has not lost something, just as the strong man who lived in defiance of sanitary laws might conceivably have been stronger and healthier still had he so complied, apart from other conditions which made his case an exceptional one.

God's precepts and the Church's Creeds apply

to the normal, not to the exceptional man. And although it would be necessary still to maintain that the heathen, and those who in Christian lands are unable to believe in God, are to that extent losers, yet we should assert that these are cases which God meets in His own way, in many of which it will be found that God was speaking to them and directing them all the time. "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."¹ It may be maintained, therefore, that to live without the knowledge of God as our Father is in this world, to say nothing of another, a condition of loss.

Let us look around us and look within. Is it not of the very last importance that I should be able to give the right answer to this question, Why am I here? I remember to have seen these three words written up in a school, and very important words they are, *Unde? Quo? Quomodo?* "Whence? Whither? How?" If every man and child could give a right answer to these questions among the six millions of London, would it not be a step towards their salvation? "Why am I here?" says the child. "Why, to amuse myself and to be amused; to eat and drink and play; and if I cannot get these things, to grudge those who have them. Restraint is a fetter on freedom, education is an amassing of useful hints to the fuller

¹ Is. xlv. 5.

accomplishment of selfish desires. If I can read and write, I can get a better place, I can get on, I can get money." And then?

"Why am I here?" says the youth. "Why, to gratify myself, like a horse turned out into a field to browse, and lie down and browse again; to resent being caught and put in the shafts. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we may die.'"

"Why am I here?" says the man. "To get on, still to get on, through manhood, old age, still to get on." And then? The addition sum of life is being cast up without its top line, the line of eternity, which contains so many big figures. So those who observe our City life have noticed, since that fateful year thirty-four years ago, when England discovered that religion was not part of useful knowledge, a gradual dying out among our teeming masses of what is spiritual, religion, higher ambitions, the knowledge of God, and much else, and the setting in of a dark unrelieved materialism. The smoke of the workers' chimney has obliterated the sun, and night has settled down in a heavy fog, which blinds the eyes, kills the flowers, and tarnishes all that was meant to be for glory and for beauty.

Not holding the Catholic Faith, the belief in God as his Father, man to that extent has lost the fulness of his being. Unbelieving man is less a man than the believer.

II

For what does it mean? It means that man has lost the sense of the end for which he was created. To lose sight of the final cause of anything is to turn out a maimed and inferior article. The final cause of a watch is to keep time; he is only a poor watchmaker who turns out pretty ornaments useless for all practical purposes. The final cause of an organ is to emit beautiful sounds; he is a poor organ-builder who can only turn out an artistic case.

And what is the final cause of man? I will give it you in the words of the old Scotch Catechism. It is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." Directly a man forgets that, his decadence sets in; and hence, if he would be saved, here in this world keep himself a man—before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith, that he believe and confess that God is his Father who made him and all the world.

III

Now what does this mean—"the end of man is to glorify God"? Could I go down among the cabbages and onions of the Sunday fair in the

East End, and say to the people, "Your end is to glorify God"? Could I go to the squares and parks of the West, and break in on the senseless church parade and say, "The end of man is to glorify God"? Not even St. Paul at Athens would meet with such a contemptuous reception as one who should so far adventure himself.

Let us guard against unreal words. I should have to bring home to one and the other, as I would try to bring home to you, that we are all parts of a great scheme, component parts of a great machine, if you will; that the wheels, and the pins, and the spring, and the case are all valuable, not because they are wheels and springs, but because they are part of the watch. This is not so hard to see. The West End of London would realize it, perhaps, if some morning the carts ceased to roll into the market, and labour ceased to flow into the places of production; and the East would feel it, if the market of supply were closed to them. I merely take this as an instance of things as they are, not of a conceivably ideal state. It is easy enough to see this, but it is not so easy to see how the glory of God stands out as an end beyond all the gain.

The glory of God is surely the realization of the work of the universe all acting smoothly, harmoniously towards an end, the heavens declaring

the glory of God, and the firmament showing His handiwork ; the failure of the Fall rolled away, the mute inarticulate wail of an imperfect world turned into glory and perfection, and man the choragus of the choir.

God expects us to add to His glory, to live as those who have all their actions turned this way and to this end ; and He expects us to do this in two ways, one direct, and the other indirect : to glorify Him (1) by directly worshipping Him ; and (2) to glorify Him by a right life. “ Does it all come to this,” you will say, “ a mere invitation to go to church ? Will the denizens of the Sunday market be turned at once into rational Christian beings if they turn into the nearest church where the bell is appealing to deaf hearers, to worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord their Maker ? Will the intolerable monotony of pleasure or the inanity of fashion be removed by simply contemplating fashionable society in the sheltered dulness of a popular church ? ” I should be prepared to maintain, at all events, this position—that he who goes to church is so far and to that extent better than he who does not, for, as I have been taught and as I have received the Faith, I know that part of my duty to God is to worship Him ; that my religious service does not, in the first place, depend on my own inclination, nor is it

designed in the first place for my own edification, but it is also designed as a public and stated recognition of God. What I know as church-going is attending at the Court of the King of kings ; my presence there, as far as it goes, is a recognition of God. Just as the actual building is a witness to the demands of God for a consecrated place amidst the pleasures and business of the crowded city, so the times of service are witnesses to the consecration of time for His service, in an age when our days sometimes seem too full to remember Him when He asks for our worship. God is asking that we should do consciously and deliberately what all nature around us is doing unconsciously and mechanically. "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth His handiwork."¹ But it is left to man, of his own free choice and with all the powers that he has, to say amidst all his engrossing work, that God is worthy of time and devotion and effort greater than he gives to any work ; it is to say amidst all his pleasures that there is a higher pleasure than all, to seek Him Who is the highest good, Who is to be honoured and loved of all His creatures ; worship is to declare the conformity of our will to God's will in joyful adoration ; and to neglect it is not only to deprive God of the honour due unto His Name ; it is to

¹ Ps. xix. 1.

injure ourselves. The man who never worships, never goes to church, is not the man he might be. He has lost the ideal of his life ; he is living in a world without the sun. He is like one of those who spends long months in the Arctic gloom, a prey to irritation and monotony and the ceaseless burden of self.

If it be true that English people are ceasing largely to go to church, God help us, for it means that, while slighting God, we are really injuring ourselves. Having to this extent not kept the Catholic Faith, we wake up to find ourselves losers, with a maimed heritage, with the integrity of our nature, to that extent, injured. "We were made, O Lord, for Thee." It is the assertion of a great truth, and, forgetting God, man becomes like that restless spirit of evil, which walks through dry places, seeking rest and finding none.

"The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature which is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !" ¹

It would mean the restoration of health and life and happiness to many a child of God to-day, if he were simply to reduce what I have tried to say bearing on the principles of worship to this practical

¹ Wordsworth.

resolution: "I should like to be a better and a happier man than I am. I will try this simple remedy of henceforth being a regular and consistent church-goer."

But God expects from those who acknowledge Him as the Father more than the proclamation of His glory in worship. He expects us to glorify Him in our lives. What a wonderful thing it is to live! to realize what God meant me to be, and what I might be! Look at the body, the body which St. Paul spoke of as the body of our humiliation, only speedily to recall how it may be fashioned into the body of Christ's glory.¹ Go with the anatomist, and let him explain to you the marvellous structure of bone and muscle, the beautiful intricacy of parts, and the variety of functions. Go with the artist, and let him point out to you, even in form and colour, the lineaments of the likeness of the Divine. Go higher. Bring before yourself what man has been, what he is, and what he may be again, with his wonderful mind, whereby he is able to grasp the truths of science, to achieve the victories of discovery, to replenish the earth and subdue it, as a very lord of creation. Look at his powers of fancy, the strength of his love, the power of his hate, the depth of his fear, the freshness of his hope, the audacity of his faith, and

¹ Phil. iii. 21.

see all these forces marshalled under the strong guidance of the will.

We can go even further, and see him with his spirit reaching right up into heaven, baring his breast to be the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, opening his heart to be the guest-chamber of the Incarnate God.

It is awful to see a man who has gone wrong, in the degradation of lust, the horrors of drunkenness, the meanness of dishonesty, the pettiness of deceit. There is nothing like it in the world of God's creation for degradation and shame. But, on the other hand, how wonderful it is to see a man who has gone right! There is nothing so beautiful anywhere as that rare result of the co-operation of man with God, known as the saintly character.

Do we realize this? We have been told lately, by an impartial critic, writing from the outside, that "Economically the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare. The great saints are immediate successes, the smaller ones are at least heralds and harbingers of a better mundane order."¹

It is with this complicated wonderful being of ours that God has designed that we should glorify Him. Surely it makes all the difference in life if a

¹ James: "The Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 377.

man can stay himself at the edge of the sensual precipice, by saying, "God did not make me to be a bunch of appetites, but through a regulated and controlled body, to glorify Him." See the awful degradation setting in in the man who forgets this ; in him who, without God in the world, without the knowledge of the Faith, becomes one huge appetite, until there rolls up from his distorted and perverted life the mist of a great darkness, until mind and spirit both seem to perish, the higher refinements are gone, and its enjoyments even are fled. We need go no further than the sensualist to see that who-soever will be sound in this God-given life, before all things it is necessary that he hold the right belief in the Fatherhood and supremacy of God.

IV

This then follows inevitably if what I have said is true, not only that we each and all and every one of us are of great importance in God's sight, but also how extremely important it is that we should realize where we are, where we stand, and what we ought to do with ourselves. It is not merely a question of how much we do, and how far we succeed, how much we amass, and how much we secure. There is the further question, how we do it.

What a difference it makes in the world when a good business man, for instance, who is enterprising and successful, is also kind to those with whom he is thrown in contact, is courteous, refined, religious ; when he lives one consistent life of goodness, and does not divide his life into two sharp divisions, secular and sacred !

Let us also remember that the belief in God as a Father carries with it, as a correlation, the belief in ourselves as His sons.

Can I without an absurd travesty of fact pose in the world as being a son of God ? And yet we ought never to rest until this absurdity, at least of imagination, merges into a remote possibility. If we had sons of God as heads of our families, would it not be better for our cities, our towns, our villages ? It is said that Imperial Rome made her gigantic strides of annexation by the colonies which she planted down here and there, throbbing with Imperial life. Christianity depends for its progress more than we think on those colonies of Christian life, aglow with Christian ardour, vigorous with Christian life, where the sons of God live together as those who believe in a common Father, Whose actions they seek to imitate and Whose likeness they tend to reproduce.

Would it not be something if sons of God ruled in our places of business, determining that

honour should stand before profit, the progress of God's kingdom before earthly success, and His righteousness before commercial prosperity? Would it not be something if sons of God moved up and down in our streets and squares and crowded warehouses, men and women who had learned the apostolic precept, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"? ¹

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." ²

"What we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, does not yet appear.
Ah! did he tell what we are here?
A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
— Is this the whole that we are here?" ³

¹ Phil. iv. 8.

² 1 St. John iii. 2.

³ Clough.

IX

THE BELIEF IN GOD THE SAVIOUR

“There is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—ACTS iv. 12.

“I BELIEVE in Jesus Christ.” To this we were pledged when we left the font, to this we pledged ourselves when we were confirmed. To this we pledge ourselves day by day, scarce knowing what we mean, or stopping to consider, when we say the Creed. But it is a tremendous addition to that simple belief in God the Father which we considered last Sunday. *is the first clause of the Creed.*

I

We are able without confusion to associate this faith in the All-Father with much of the picturesque and poetic beliefs of the ancient world. They, too, through the flimsy veil of grotesque mythology, looked into the heavens, and believed God to reign there, with power over human destiny, the Arbiter of fate and the Rewarder of the righteous. They,

too, felt beneath the outspread beauty of the earth a living presence of God. "God is everything you see, the world is only the shrine of His presence and the veil of His glory." So with many of the great systems of nature-worship with which we are brought into contact to-day in the march of our civilization: beneath them there is the sense of an overshadowing majesty which can be used and elevated and stripped of its superstitious adjuncts and purged from its materialism.

But "I believe in Jesus Christ, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, . . . being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made," is at once to bring in a different element altogether. This sad, attenuated figure, with arms outstretched upon the Cross, seems at once to drive away the nymphs from the fountains, the dryads from the groves, and to pass like a cloud across the sun, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"¹ crowned with thorns, not with roses, outcast, despised, rejected, crucified, at one time enwrapped in the miraculous, at another apparently overwhelmed with humanity and its capacities for suffering. At once we introduce with this Divine figure a history which is challenged at every step, a history which cannot be dissolved into poetry, or relegated into

¹ Isa. liii. 3.

myth dear to the soul of those who think they can believe and disbelieve at the same time.

The claims of Christianity are tremendous, and you claim to be Christians. Pledged, remember, not merely to believe that Jesus Christ was ~~born~~ *of a Virgin*, lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven—to believe that is something—but to believe in Him as a living power, very God of very God, as One who demands from you, as the condition of discipleship, that sombre and all-pervading requirement, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”¹ *This is the claim of Christ and it can only be a divine claim.*

— We cannot hear altogether unmoved the taunt that modern Christianity is a civilized heathenism.

◁ We see an uneasy attempt to shuffle off the claims of Christianity as the unmeaning accretion of after-ages of unquestioning discipleship. >

◁ We must be careful, while we call Christ Jesus the Master, not to forget that He is also our Saviour. That postulates a great truth which we cannot push aside with the Athanasian Creed. We listen to Him, it may be, as One who has said some very beautiful things and has given us some very useful advice. Jesus Christ is placed, as we may see in a beautiful building near London, as one of the great teachers of

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 24.

the world, with Socrates and Confucius and Buddha and Mahomet. But it is not what Christ has taught us, but what Christ has done for us, that the Church and our Bible put before us as the object of our belief: "I believe in Jesus Christ our Saviour"—nothing short of this.

And no wonder men shrink from it, for it is a tremendous belief. What does it mean when we send our missionaries forth to preach Christianity?

What does it mean when we say that this is a Christian nation? What does it mean when we say that we are worshipping in a Christian church?

What does it mean when I say that I am a Christian?

Is there anything in my life which is distinctive of Christianity? Anything which a better heathen could not have done equally well? It is a question which, you know, has been propounded in a book which, whether we agree with it or not, must make us think: "What would Christ have done?"

What am I doing because I am a Christian? Surely where we go wrong and lose ourselves so completely is in looking upon Christ as an isolated phenomenon, as a Teacher who suddenly sprang upon the world at a date in history, forgetting that He is God, that the Old Testament is

a Christian record just as much as the New. God made the world, and man marred it. God was willing to restore the world, and man is allowed to co-operate in that restoration.

What was the cause of the marring of the world? A false estimate which man took of happiness, that life and joy and wisdom were to be found in satisfying appetite. How does God propose to restore the world? By Himself coming into it to show us how to live, and to lead us away from appetite, from pleasure, from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life unto the true life which is in union with Him, and in the love for higher things.

II

But
Hence, the distinguishing marks of Christianity are sacrifice and struggle. A Christian will be known from a non-Christian as one who, having taken a right view of life, knows that it means a long struggle and perpetual sacrifice. Do not make the mistake of thinking that Christianity means the pale face and the lacerated body and the constant thwarting of all desires. If you cannot escape into life without these sacrifices, it does so mean, but not otherwise. It means death to the lower that we may live in the higher. It

means a sacrifice of much which the world values, because the Church has found something higher. It means that the soul loves to be with God better than eating the forbidden fruit. It means that the soul would rather be an outcast with Christ than be popular without Him. A Christian is one who is able to say with all his heart : "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."¹

Are you quite content to go with the multitude, to eat and drink and sleep, without one noble aspiration after higher things? Do you go as near sin as you dare, and think yourself to have done wonders if you escape without singeing your wings? Do you think a great deal of what the world says of you, so that you are a captive to the voice of its shifty applause? Is your aim directed solely and simply to getting on and amassing luxuries and comforts? Is religion to you an occasional conformity with custom, which you dislike and even dread? If so, I fear you are not a Christian, whatever else you may be. Is it likely? is it possible? Can it be that the tremendous price of the Cross was paid, and the suffering and anguish of the Crucifixion were endured, simply that I should drift along the broad stream of the world, with an occasional glance at the

¹ Rev. v. 9.

receding form of the Crucified, from which I am speeding further and further away?

A life which has no mark of sacrifice on it, no cross in it, is not, cannot be, a Christian life. We ought to be exhibiting in our own lives the seriousness of Christ's Sacrifice, the strength of Christ's Sacrifice, and the power of Christ's Sacrifice. Surely, it is not difficult to see that the figure of Christ Crucified projects over all Christianity, an image of great seriousness.

Look at this man who has just been rescued from the fire—he only realizes the extent of the danger when he has escaped, when he sees the skill and the resource, the danger and difficulties which they passed through who rescued him. The patient then realizes, it may be for the first time, the extent of his danger when he sees the elaborate preparations which are being made for the operation which is to save his life. Military life ceases to be an affair of bands and uniforms and martial display to one who has seen the grim realities of war.

Would that the Church could impart to the butterfly Christian something of its own seriousness, that seriousness which underlies the great machinery of her sanctification and the simplicity of her rites! Holy Baptism, which seems to us such a simple thing, which is connected in

our minds with innocent infancy, yet, to those who know, speaks of a death unto sin, and is connected, as we have seen, with far-reaching pledges and an enlisting into the army of the Cross. Confirmation, no less speaks to us of the battle-shock, the rush of temptation, the persistence of trial which makes necessary the spiritual bracing of the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. The altar is red with the blood of the Sacrifice; its perpetual pleading mounts up to God, "Spare us, good Lord; spare Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood.", As sometimes when an army is marching out to battle, the eye passes away from the glitter and pomp of martial display, and lights on the ambulance-train and hospital corps, and realizes by their presence what war means; so the clergy, as they move in and out among the people, the provisions for healing the scars of sin, the frequent Absolutions, the exhortations to repentance, all speak of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. In all the Church does and in all the Church says there is the seriousness of those who know the tremendous issues which are at stake. We do not hear, "This is the Catholic Faith, believe it or not as you like, it is of no consequence;" but "This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he

In the Church

cannot be saved.”) We do not hear an uncertain voice saying, “Here is Baptism, accept it if you will; Here is Holy Communion, receive it if you so desire”; but “Here are two Sacraments generally necessary to salvation”—not because an arbitrary decree has so ordered, not as we read in some Eastern wonder-tale of the tyrannical conditions imposed on trembling subjects by a mere caprice and love of dominion, but because in the mind of Absolute Truth the one is known to be the way of safety and the other the accredited way of salvation.

At all events, to a Christian, religion can be no graceful appendage to his life, an after-thought and excrescence, for which he must make provision. A religion which consists in hearing a sermon, or listening to good advice, or in attending what is sometimes called “a bright service,” is ludicrously inadequate. To the Jew, as we see in the Old Testament, his religion made very real and very serious demands. It laid its hand on his time, his substance, his very food. If this were so in that religion, which was a shadow of good things to come, can it be less with that which is the substance? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”¹ This is the serious message

¹ St. Matt. vi. 33.

of a serious religion. This is the claim of a vital Christianity.

for But, after all, a mere statement, a mere claim like this, may be evaded. If Christianity is what I claim it to be, there must be some means of verifying its claims and putting it to the test.

Then Suppose ~~that~~, instead of dallying with the fringe of Christianity, I put it to the test. Suppose that, relying on my Baptismal and Confirmation grace, I became an earnest communicant, and determine to avail myself of all that Christianity promises to do for me—what result should I find? Most certainly you would then find, what Christ designed you to find, that His religion is a religion of strength. As a matter of fact, is not this the place where we are failing? It is a mistake, surely, to say that men and women of this age are abandoning themselves to courses, of which history and experience only know one end, because they will to have it so. It is a mistake to suppose, for instance, that the subversion of great moral principles which we see everywhere is due to innate viciousness in the men of our time. Intemperance makes its deadly strides, gambling is perverting public honour, divorce and other abominations are debasing national character. The observance of Sunday and the obligation of Divine worship are loosened. Why? Not because God's people will

to have it so, but because there is a lamentable absence of moral strength to resist a corrupt fashion, and the tide of laxity in morals. Men have not the strength to resist what they know to be to their soul's harm. And it is just here that true and vital Christianity gives the remedy, it supplies that reserve of strength which enables a man to resist evil, to not only know what is right, but do it.

Christianity still carries with it that wonderful strength which enabled a few fishermen and slaves to bear up against the weight of public opinion, against the wisdom of this world which was ever bidding them restate their Christianity, against the worldly policy which was ever bidding them to modify it. The religion of Christ Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. My brother, whoever you are, if you will become a consistent Christian you will cease to be that poor weak creature which you are now, contemptible even to yourself. You will not quake before the jeers of the servant, when Christ is mocked; you will not be false to your own tradition and a traitor to your own convictions; you will not suffer the unutterable anguish of a dishonoured conscience, or the sense of servitude which is his lot who is the mercenary of society or the slave of fashion. Whatever else we may be,

God called us to be free, to rule within the circle of our own personality ; and who is it that exhibits that splendid spectacle of a perfect life, as far as perfection is within the reach of sinful man ? Who is it that exhibits a will seated firmly on the throne, guided from on high with heavenly wisdom, assisted and supported by the ready council of an unclouded intellect and an unbiassed mind ? Who is it that is able to maintain an equable and profitable rule over these turbulent senses which are marshalled under its banner, excellent servants but deadly masters ? Who but the earnest Christian, who has learned the secret of strength, and so the secret of his own power, who is no mere misshapen appetite masquerading in the form of man, no slave of another's whims and caprices, no mutilated serf, nor dishonoured accomplice of evil, but one who has learned the secret of his own strength, and the glory of his own destiny, as he has brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.¹

III

I ask you, Is not the state of England to-day a corroboration of the statement, "Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation : that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

our Lord Jesus Christ"? Is the state of our city populations a state which even un-Christian enthusiasts are prepared to acquiesce in? We are told of an attenuated physique. The Army asks for men, and receives dwarfs. We are told of instruction and a merciless inpouring of useful knowledge upon mental vessels, on whose intelligence the cover remains tightly fastened down. We hoped for an educated race, we are told that we are putting up with an instructed one—or shall we say crammed with undigested intelligence?

We looked for a spiritual race—at least we were told that the love of the true and the beautiful and the good would more than compensate for the effete superstition known as denominational religion—and we read of the Hooligans' Sunday on the river, of words too filthy, and of actions too disgusting for those who in their turn have desecrated Sunday, but believe themselves to be refined. Perhaps we shall wake up presently to find that a belief in the Fatherhood of God is impossible without its compensating belief in a Saviour. Just as you may see in some complicated machinery which is to pierce the mountain rock or drive a way through opposing obstacles that it must yet have its guards, its protectors, its cleansing and cooling appliances—simple progress being impossible, in the conditions in which the work has

to be done—so, if I may borrow this rough and clumsy illustration from material life and apply it to that awful mystery where all words and all illustrations fail and are powerless, the belief in God the Saviour must ever accompany the belief in God the Father. The one is the necessary complement of the other.

Our need surely at the present day is not to restate Christianity, but to revive it, to reinstate it, if you will.

Never was a more untrue statement made than that Christianity must commend itself to every age.

At the first promulgation of Christian truth the religious world abhorred it and the intellectual world despised it.

St. Paul is laughed out of court when he speaks at Athens, and when he is writing to the Christians at Rome he writes as one who thinks that the Gospel may appear ridiculous. "I am not ashamed," he says, "of the Gospel of Christ."¹ His preaching he knew to be foolishness to the intellectual world.

So if you are disposed to wait until you can make Christianity acceptable to the ordinary literary man, you may wait a long time. If no doctrinal statement is to be made in the Creeds which the most ignorant man can misunderstand, or which is susceptible of any suggested

¹ Rom. i. 16.

ambiguity which can be foisted into it ; if you are waiting until Christianity can commend itself as a rational religion, again I say you must wait a long time. "Faith," it has been said, "begins with an experiment and ends with an experience." You have to take that step into the unknown without knowing where you will exactly find a rest for the sole of your foot. It is a hard saying, but it is true, Christianity can only be seen from the inside and cannot then be proved. If a man will take Christ at His Word, and do what Christ tells him to do, not only will the difficulty pass away, but he will be a new creation.

Here, then, is a great work for all to do, in preaching the gospel of a consistent life. The Church may say a right faith is necessary to salvation, and men will resist it, and be encouraged to resist it ; but let them see that there is a life and a perfection in those who have the Faith of Jesus Christ which does not exist to the same extent in those who are without it, and they will confess of a truth that God is with you, and will glory in the salvation of Jesus Christ, and will know it as a truth once more of experimental life, that furthermore it is necessary to the salvation, even here in this world of his composite being, that a man should believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

X

THE BELIEF IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST

“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”—
ACTS xix. 2.

I

SUCH is the condition of many at the present day in Christian England, and that not merely by reason of the practical heathenism in which too many of our children grow up in our large cities. This, alas! is because, sweep as she will, search as she will, the Church is unable to find those lost coins which belong to the King, which lie hidden beneath the dust and rubbish of a material age. This is sad enough; no man to whom God has given even a competency ought to be able to sleep in his bed if he has not subscribed something to those diocesan funds which try to deal with this vast and awful problem.

But there is a sadder fact even than this. Many of our children are being deliberately brought up in ignorance of the Holy Spirit, of His grace and work, because some are pleased to call this great doctrine, which God Himself has revealed, denominational; who say, that is, "Such beliefs and doctrines are well enough for Churchmen with their priesthood and their Sacraments, but simpler people of a purer faith are content with the plain teaching of a plain religion. To look up to God in heaven and call Him Father is quite sufficient religion for any child. Why puzzle his head about such things as a Saviour or the Atonement? Why speak to him of the Holy Ghost, Whom wiser heads than his are unable to realize or approach? A simple and intelligible religion, uncorrupted with dogmatic puzzles, is the religion which is best adapted to the day. If Jesus Christ said, 'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'¹—if He said this, we know better. Baptism is denominational, the Holy Ghost is unintelligible; therefore we teach as a working and reasonable foundation of morality the

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 (R.V.).

Fatherhood of God, protected by a conscience clause."

I have been endeavouring to point out to you that when the Creed says, "This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved," the Church is enunciating a fact which, as far as this world goes, and supposing for the moment there is no other, admits of abundant demonstration from common experience. A man who does not believe in a Saviour will have great difficulty in saving, that is, keeping intact, that store of blessing which God has laid up with him in body, soul, and spirit, and, as I shall hope to show you, a man who does not believe in the Holy Ghost is, to say the least of it, throwing away the greatest power which he can have of preserving him from the corruption which is in the world through sin; nay, I would go farther, and say that a man who goes to meet the spiritual foes which beset his life, unprovided with the spiritual weapons which God designed him to use, is as one who goes to meet a modern foe who is armed with weapons of precision, himself only equipped with bow and arrows.

We are constantly bidden to admire this age in which we live; to go against the spirit of the age is to confess one's self at once to be outside the pale of rational beings. The preacher will lay himself

open to attack as a pessimist if he fails to see that we live in the best possible age of a best possible world, and if he conceives it to be the duty of the Church and the duty of the clergy to warn.

The tendency of the time is, I know, in the direction of destroying any conception of future punishment, of removing all warnings, both as to wrong belief and wrong doing, from the Creed ; of expurgating that very stern book, the New Testament, of all its hard sayings ; and of reposing in the undenominational worship of an unknowable nothingness.

But to those who are not blind to things as they are, it is just in these points where we have been unfaithful to God's teachings, that the terrible corruption of which we cannot but be conscious is advancing with deadly strides.

" I believe in the Holy Ghost "—this is the voice which must be heard before a regenerate England is able to stand without blushing at the head of Christian civilization. See the devoted efforts which are being made, and the sums of money which are being spent in national education. See the heroic struggle in the cause of temperance, and the fierce earnestness with which it grapples with its giant foe. See the vigilance committees, which barely keep at arm's length vice so horrible that

even Paganism would be ashamed of it. Look at the devoted bands of clergy, of sisters, of lay helpers of all sorts. They will tell you that the forces of evil are too much for them; they can keep them in check, but that is all.

Vice sits coiled up in our city like the Minotaur of old, demanding its yearly tribute of our young men and maidens.

If those who hear me knew how wide-spread crime is; if they knew the inner lives of many with whom they are brought into contact in the business of life; if they knew the great cry of despair which is going up, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹ they would know that it is not knowledge that people need: knowledge of the higher good, I repeat once more, is powerless in the grip of passion. It is not culture that people need: sin when it loses its brutality becomes oftentimes more dangerous. It is not moral precept that will keep a man straight: the most Christian philosopher, in his model state, is constrained to establish a Dane-law, an Alsatia, where sins which he could not hope to eject must live as a tolerated evil, and exist as a hidden shame.

Power is what we need. Power is the message of Christianity; power is the gift which the Holy Ghost has to bring to those who are being cruelly

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

deprived of this saving knowledge. The vice-stricken body, the vice-blasted mind, the vice-shrunken spirit, are to be saved, quickened into power, only by a saving belief in the Holy Ghost.

II

Do you resent so hasty and so wide a generalization? Let us examine it, then, on a reduced scale. Let us take a solitary instance—let me look at myself. What, as a Christian, has the Holy Ghost been to me? What do I owe to that pledge so manfully made, to that vow so courageously renewed, “Dost thou believe in God the Father, Who made thee and all the world? Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, Who redeemed thee and all mankind? Dost thou believe in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth thee and all the elect people of God?” “Yes; all this I stedfastly believe.”

Undoubtedly it is true of each one of us, that if we wish to be saved, if we wish to preserve blameless and entire unto the coming of Jesus Christ that body of our humiliation, if we wish to keep that mind with all its powers unspotted and clear, if we wish to guard the spirit as the unsullied mirror of God’s holiness, the unstained

dwelling of His Majesty, we must believe in the Holy Ghost.

What do I mean?

1. I mean that, first of all, we shall have to reckon with that mystery of heredity which, whether we know it or not under that name, has perpetually to be taken into account in the Christian course.

We all of us know and acknowledge the obvious truth that physical traits are transmitted from father to son. Perhaps before now we have been greeted by one who tells us, "I should have known you anywhere to be one of your family, from the extraordinary resemblance you bear to your father." The colour of eyes and hair, tricks of manner, lines of expression, handwriting, physical excellence, physical incapacity, and mental endowments too, at least in some cases—these appear and reappear, as if mocking at our identity, as if Nature used a mould, and we were only one of a series. So it is; this is patent and obvious. But we forget sometimes the no less certain fact that moral traits are transmitted as well; that the poor murderer who is now expiating his offence, inherited, it may be, homicidal tendencies from those above him, the drunkard his tendency to intemperance, the dishonest his pilfering. See what a paralysis to all moral effort this doctrine may be, nay is—until we remember that, first of

all, as regards the doctrine itself, heredity does not mean the inevitable inheritance of moral traits from our immediate pair of ancestors. There is a long heredity behind us, not merely that of our father and mother. Even in our physical heredity the grandfather or even remoter ancestor will sometimes reappear, and there will be walking the earth a living reproduction of one who lived in the days of the Stuarts. So with our moral heredity, many tendencies strive within us, many impulses crave for the mastery, and it is the function of the will to adjudicate between them. Here is a doctrine absolute and incontestable, that, whatever happens, at least "I am free," free to choose between my tendencies, free to act; and so we find that different members of a family who share the same heredity make different uses of it. In the same family one has gone here and one has gone there in his process of development, and there is a likeness in diversity.

But the Holy Spirit deals with this initial difficulty in His own way and with His own power. As every instructed Churchman knows, the Sacrament of Baptism is a great deal more than a symbolical rite of initiation. The comparison which our Lord made between it and such a rite as was the baptism of St. John, the extraordinarily strong language in which the necessity of Holy

Baptism is insisted on in the New Testament, not here nor there, but systematically, would lead us to suspect this. It is only the superficial unintelligent way in which men read the Bible, which prevents them from making the same complaints of the intolerance of the New Testament which they now make with reference to the Creed. But the Bible, in so far as it is a revelation, is to show to men the way of salvation, what they must do to be saved; that is to say, what measures they must take against these forces of destruction which will lead to disintegration here, and eternal loss hereafter. Holy Baptism, we accordingly find, is no arbitrary symbol, which might be replaced, as it is in some sects, by an intellectual adhesion to religious teaching. It is God's own way of dealing with that which, if left untouched, is a serious drawback in the Christian cause. It is quite true that when you entered on life you entered it with a bias towards evil, which represented not only the fatal entail of generations, but which carried with it the hereditary plague of the whole human race, namely, original sin. And God met you at the font; He accepted the vicarious faith of the representatives of the Church; and He gave you a nature from which that entail was cut off, and power to deal with the weakness and tendencies which remained, so that

the Prayer-book, again using Bible language, speaks of us as placed by Baptism in a state of salvation.

Surely, one will say, this proves too much. The most ordinary experience will show that not all baptized persons live in a state of grace; that there is no sharp distinction to be observed between the baptized and unbaptized; and, further, that experience shows in our own case that it is only by constant care and stern repression that the evil desires and appetites are restrained from working a disastrous overthrow.

When a patient has been rescued by a doctor from a disease which threatened death, he is to that extent placed in a state of salvation as far as his bodily health is concerned; but it is a common fact of every-day experience that, whether from neglect of the proper *régime* or general carelessness of life, he not only may, but does, frequently relapse into a worse state than he was in before.

Holy Baptism is not a charm, it is not a mechanical operation of salutary grace; but it does enable a man to face the great problem of original sin, and to face the complications of heredity.

Modern panaceas of regeneration are more extravagant than are the Divine remedies of Heavenly Wisdom. Temperance is a more noble thing in itself than abstinence, although for millions of people, more especially if they are brought up in ignorance

of God's methods, abstinence is the only possible salvation. God would have the Christian, He would have all of us, use the marvellous mechanism of our body, the wonderful possibilities of the mind, as well as the powers of the spirit, in accordance with His holy laws. It is not His wish that we should appear before Him without our right eyes and maimed in our right foot. All those sins which so distress you are good things run into evil. Remember, at the bottom of the scale there is animal sensuality; at the top there is a sacrament which signifies the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and His Church. At the bottom there are the drunkard and the glutton, turning the things that should have been to their wealth into an occasion of falling; at the top there is the devout communicant, who, under the form of bread and wine, feasts on the Body and Blood of Christ.

The parable of the unjust steward shows us what good powers are diverted into the sink of dishonesty. A passionate Moses emerges as a splendid leader of men, a soft and easy Barnabas as the gentle son of persuasion. The economy of God is to help us to use to the full that which in the beginning He made very good. We know better; we banish all sacramental teaching as superstition; we believe, in a spirit of innate Pelagianism, dear to the British heart (for was not Pelagius a Welshman?), that if

we teach morality, children will be moral, and the result is patent and known of all men. Once more, it is power that we want, and in the spiritual world knowledge is not necessarily power. We have no sufficiency of ourselves "to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."¹ What we need for our own advance, what England needs in her system of education, what London needs, is place for God, place for that power from on high which God is willing to bestow on a nature which left to itself is very much as if we surrounded our fires with muslin, or deposited gunpowder on our hearths. This world makes short work of unprotected, unassisted nature. If we are sinking back baffled and disheartened because our hereditary taint is too much for us, listen to the advice which the Apostle would give: "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee."

2. But it is not poor human nature that is altogether at fault in its desperate weakness and miserable tendencies. We are baffled by the horrible *detritus* which is ground away by our advancing civilization. Things which we believed were to be such a blessing turn out so ill. Those medical discoveries with which God has so blessed us get into bad hands, and scientific crime appals us by its easiness, its prevalence, and its impunity. The

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

squalid streets and shrunken forms, which lie as the shadow to our sunny squares and parks, are a symbol of the seamy side which seems inevitable to all ages of renaissance. We ourselves are conscious of the lethargic numbness which fastens on our generous effort, as a legacy from the increasing luxury of the day, its shrinking from pain, and its love of amusement. Here again, as with heredity so with environment, God designed His own protection and His own enrichment. In all times of our tribulation and in all times of our wealth He designed us to feel the protection of His Divine indwelling. Temples of the Holy Ghost. This is what He designed us to be.¹ Temples in which the Presence of God should drive away what was bad, attract what was good, and so enable us to realize the splendid conception of the Psalmist: "Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men: Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues."²

It will be obvious to any one who thinks at all that life is one. I mean, that we cannot divide up our lives, as the Education Department seek to divide instruction, into secular and religious.

The division of education into religious and secular is a wrong one, and ought never to have

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² Ps. xxxi. 22.

been allowed on the school time-table. See, as the natural result, religion driven into a corner of the day, its value diminished, no prizes, no distinctions to be earned in it; the Government will utterly ignore it. See the character of this attenuated residuum attacked, diminished, eviscerated, in some places utterly destroyed, and secularism supreme. This is logical; but what God designed was that religion should be supreme. We need to exhibit the sacred nature of secular knowledge, not to secularize religion. Has religion nothing to say to history? History is but the ever-evolving revelation of the power of God. Has religion nothing to say to science, to the absolute perfecting of skill, and the expanding of all the powers of a composite life? Religiousness is what we want—Progress, development, science, all part of the one life of man as God designed it to be. This is it which makes the Bible such a wonderful book; this is why the Bible is distasteful to modern systems.

The Bible displays to us all life viewed on the side of God—national, family, intellectual, artistic life viewed on the side of God, in its oneness and in its fulness.

This is one meaning of that wonderful saying, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."¹ Without the Spirit of the Lord it is impossible to

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17.

live in an environment like this. As I said above, without the Spirit of the Lord abstinence is the only possible attitude of safety; with the Spirit of the Lord there may be a use which is temperance.

Let us unify our lives in the power of the Spirit. Let us seek to know the religion of common life, and the fulness and not the deadliness of advancing civilization, as it passes purified into the temple of our life. Union with Christ, high effort, noble desires, sacramental indwelling,—these are the necessities, not the luxuries, of life.

But so far have we receded from this standpoint, that he who would seek to proclaim the message to the masses of sordid heathenism around us, would be regarded as an amiable enthusiast. At least we can begin with ourselves. "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith." Surely we shall not rest content with living on a part of our inheritance.

What is a more pitiable sight than to see some abbey or cathedral, designed for the highest service of God, now empty, unroofed, desolate, swept and garnished for the delectation of tourists, perhaps to be used as a place for a picnic or the performance of an acrobat? How our whole soul revolts at such a desecration, such a perversion of purpose! But is this to compare with the maimed and frivolous purposes to which men put the temples of

the Lord, desecrated shrines of God, emptied of meaning, false to the final cause for which they were made, swept and garnished and made respectable as a frivolous contribution to a frivolous age?

At least let us rouse ourselves to the dignity of life, to the realization of the purpose for which we were created.

“I believe in God the Father Almighty” means a great deal in the purpose and orientation of life. “I believe in Jesus Christ” means an acceptance both of His salvation wrought for us, and of His sanctification offered to us. “I believe in the Holy Ghost” means a living co-operation with that saving influence which alone can keep us safe in view of our own heredity, in view of the environment, so full of peril, in which we move.

It is this that the Church has in view when she so mercifully warns us. Without God you cannot be the man you might be here; it is to fail of your great end and immense possibilities. To be left without God, hereafter to be left to ourselves, to be left to our own choice—what does that mean? Will any expurgation of warnings, will any closing of the Bible, will any shutting our eyes to disagreeable truths, alter the result?

To be without God is that eternal loss which is hell. To be with God is that eternal gain which is heaven.

XI

HEALTH¹

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”—3 ST. JOHN 2.

HERE is one of those private letters such as we have once more in the Epistle to Philemon, enshrined in the pages of sacred scripture as part of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It is a letter from the apostle of love to one who was evidently very dear to him, and who was possibly somewhat of an invalid, or afflicted with some recent illness. It mentions incidentally, and as a preliminary to greater topics, that familiar subject, which figures so largely in correspondence and conversation—health.

It is a word which you members of the Guild of St. Luke, at all events, are familiar with in your daily practice of scientific benevolence ; and equally to us clergy it represents the aim and object of our work, as fellow-ministers with you in the service of

¹ Preached before the Guild of St. Luke in St. Paul's Cathedral, October 17, 1906.

man, as fellow-disciples with you, of that Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil, in the power of the indwelling presence of God. It forms the burden of the daily confession, which we make for ourselves and for our people, "There is no health in us." It is the fulness of blessing which we ask God day by day to bestow upon our sovereign, as the representative of the people, "Grant him in health and wealth long to live," which means really a great deal more than "Make him robust and rich." It means rather give him the fulness of Divine blessing in capacity, progress, and resource, in the fulness of every blessing which a man may receive.

If it be true that the ministry to man's needs, owing to the wideness of the area which those needs cover, must tend more and more to be departmental in manifold and nice subdivisions, it will surely help us to-day to feel that two great professions, such as religion and medicine (if I may be pardoned this somewhat loose nomenclature in expressing my meaning), have one and the same ultimate aim, namely, the health of mankind; that however much we may tend to separate, that at last we meet in aim, as we constantly meet in practice, at the feet of Him our one Lord, our one Maker, who says to us both,

“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”

I

Health! Pause for one moment to consider this magnificent conception, and what it means. Health means, I suppose, simply “wholeness,” “to heal” means to make whole. And you would be the last to say that the whole body or even the whole mind had exhausted your conception of health. You would extend it to signify the whole man.

Apart from more sinister developments, is there not a tendency at the present day to worship out of all proportion health of body, to the detriment of the health of the entire man? Are we not witnessing on the one hand a partial realization of those words, “He that findeth his life shall lose it”?² There is a nervous apprehension of possible disease setting in, accompanied by a narrowing selfishness and a disabling power. We see men hastening *propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas*, and from dread of possible disease, going in bondage to an actual valetudinarianism. The sun smites them by day, the moon by night, the food they eat is poisoned to them, their way through life is beset with the terrors of contagion and infection. They dare

¹ St. Matt. x. 8.

² St. Matt. x. 39.

not receive even the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar with the calm of a deep adoration, overshadowed as they are by fear of infection. Are we not witnessing again a disproportionate and unworthy development of mere physical culture, in the selfish pursuit of bodily strength, in the worship of athleticism and material comfort? Here let it be distinctly remembered that Christianity has no quarrel with the body, it has a great quarrel with the flesh. The body is sacred to the Christian, as having been made by God : as for ever dignified by the glorious Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. St. Paul never spoke of "our vile body," but rather of "the body of our humiliation."¹ He has told us how we can glorify God in our body, as well as in our spirit, which are God's.² We go with the artist in the glad recognition of the beauty of form and colour, with which God has dowered the body. We go with the surgeon heart and soul in our admiration and awe at the functions and mechanism of that wonderful machine. As one of our bishops, a distinguished son of a most distinguished surgeon, has said, "The pleasure which Aristotle found in wonder grows ever more intense as the student moves nearer to the recognition of the inner mysteries of life : as he learns

¹ Phil. iii. 21.

² 1 Cor. vi. 20.

the incalculable subtlety of that which he had fancied simplest, and sees that every part and act of his own body may claim the dignity of an endless problem.”¹

If the body has been called “the nearest camp to the enemy,” we know also that splendid conception of “the body as our friend.” It is General Gordon who tells us in his simple way, “I cannot help thinking that the body has much to do with religion.”

“Let us not always say,
‘Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!’
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, ‘All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps
soul!’”

No, the Church has no quarrel with the body, but the body is only part of man, after all. It has been suggested that man is comparable to a building of three stories, body, soul, and spirit, and that he should be advised always to live in the upper story. But no, the Christian wants to live in all three; he aims at health, and health means wholeness, and he cannot acquiesce in a dismemberment of his composite being, either from fear or from want of realizing his own inherent value.

¹ Bishop Paget.

Fellow-ministers of health, here we join hands. We pass and repass in the departmental work of our several callings, into the region of our mutual spheres of observation and experiment. The priest knows how much the spirit is influenced by what it has to fear and gain from the body and mind. The physician and the surgeon know the ally or foe he may meet in the spirit. Both alike are working for health, and that the health of the whole being, in its wonderful perfection.

One object of this service held here to-night is to bring us together before the throne, as fellow-workers in the cause of health.

II

And what have we found? Surely if our aim is one—religion and medicine—our difficulties and our hopes are one.

What a mystery it is that the great caravan of human life, as it draws its long course across the desert of the world, should be of necessity accompanied by such an army of repairers. Why is it that human nature is always breaking down? Why at every stage, from its cradle to its grave, is it constrained to put forth those pleading hands, those supplicating cries for help? Why is there this profound, this all-pervading ill-health, this want of soundness in human nature to which we

are called to minister? The great Apostle St. Paul listened to the cry of Creation as it mounted up before God. He noted the upturned head of the creature patiently waiting for some relief which it knew would come to a state of undeserved and unwilling degradation. And what was the burden of the wail which he heard deep and inarticulate? What was the meaning of that strained attitude of maimed expectancy? It was the burden of failure, the sense of failure, the burden of a great catastrophe which lay heavy on Creation, and which still marks with its deep furrow all nature around us.¹ Why is it that, as Aristotle saw of old, man left to himself is depraved towards all depravity beyond any other living thing? Why is there this inherent and inevitable bias towards deterioration in all living things?

St. Paul was not the only person who noted this sinister trait in the beauty of the world. The great philosophers of the ancient world, the grand tragedians, the gay poets, all have noticed it. Stoic and Epicurean had both their methods of dealing with it. We as clergy, you as physicians, are brought face to face with different manifestations of it. We clergy, at all events, know it as the mystery of sin, stamped on the world. Any thinking man will know it also as such, and will

¹ Rom. viii. 20.

mark the strange susceptibility to pain, disease, failure, which depress and degrade it, to diseases of the mind even more subtle, in the constant tendency to fail here and there in that wholeness, that health which was man's original birthright, and the loss of which is his perennial curse.

It is a noble effort, a noble aim, gradually to eradicate bodily disease, but not to rest there. If we do not intend to live in the upper story alone, much less do we contemplate for man a perpetual abode in the lowest. I should only insult you if I supposed you only to be interested in making man a healthy animal, with a highly developed reason. Join with us, I beseech you, in healing man's spirit, in eradicating the germs of sin, which mar his wholeness and perfection. You have much to do to help us here. We help you when all human skill has failed, in proclaiming to the chronic invalid and the weary sufferer the glorious message of the Cross, in the consecration of suffering, not only to secure the virtue of patience, but to a place among the great salutary agencies of the world's activity. Face to face as we all are with the mystery of pain and failure, help us to bring about the perfect wholeness of the healthy man.

More especially in view of some recent letters in the *Times*, and of a scientific investigation there beginning as to the diminution in the birth-rate.

Help us, as you can, to tell people that nothing may be bought, not even bodily health, at the price of dishonour, or the wholeness of one part of the being at the expense of another. It makes one envious, while it makes one thankful, to see that in England and Ireland at all events Roman Catholics have been able in the strength of religion to stem this national danger. It will be strange if we cannot do the same, by a hearty recognition of the claim of the entire man to health, instead of a frantic attempt to gain this world, at the price of the soul, and to prefer supposed bodily health and indulgence, to the health of an unclouded spirit bathed in the light of the contemplation of God. You can help us here, you can help us with our young men, you can help us with those who represent to us the England that is yet to be.

These wounds, these bruises, these putrifying sores, are mysteries which may well stagger us. "Sir," we say, "didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?"¹ The progress of the world is followed by a vast band of men and women whose main work lies in repair. Why is it? Will it always be so? Shall we face facts? Shall we believe what God has told us, while we resolutely turn ourselves once more to the ministry of health?

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 27.

III

Bear with me, if I try to point out in conclusion that we cannot stop here. We are not called upon to labour in a hopeless toil, as we minister to the wounded in a strife, to which we see neither end nor intermission.

If we are face to face with the mystery of failure and disease, in our daily life, we are also face to face with the mystery of recovery. What a power is that which enables the poor maimed life to answer to the healing remedy, what wonderful powers of recovery there are, what alleviations are daily being discovered, what powers of renewal which simulates wholeness, and sometimes in a maimed state goes about the world, the safer for the removal of that which was a menace by reason of susceptibility.

I hesitate to venture particularly into a region where you would speedily convince me of ignorance, and I would ask you equally to take on trust the experience of those who deal in departments also but little known to your methods of research. May we not say, ought we not to say, that there is every hope for the health of the race, in the wonderful power of recovery which God has

given us, if we resolutely refuse to put up with anything short of the life of health which God designed for His creatures?

If, as I said just now, there is nothing to compare with man in degradation when he goes wrong, so there is nothing to compare with man in beauty and nobility of nature when he goes right. Read such a book as Professor James's "The Varieties of Religious Experience," and see what he says about the value of saintliness. Trust those who read records of experience, which are not open to the public eye, when they tell you of the abiding truth of those words, "With His stripes we are healed."¹

What are the two rocks on which the good ship of health is commonly wrecked? Are they not heredity and environment?

Have not you physicians, equally with us clergy, to wrestle with the weak constitutions predisposed towards the taint of corruption? Have we not both to reckon with conditions of life which seem to render health impossible? Here there has been, there is no power comparable to that of Christianity in dealing with the hereditary taint which vitiates character; with the evil surroundings which seem to make spiritual health impossible.

Here once more I plead, and I shall not plead in vain, for a generous recognition of the reality of

¹ Isa. liii. 5.

spiritual influences on the general health of the whole man.

The more we live, and the more science has to say to us, the more we see how little we know of the occult influence of the spiritual world, and how real is the presumption in favour of those spiritual influences to which religion makes claim.

I speak in the interests of this which, if I seem to magnify my office, I place at the very summit of the influences which make for health—spiritual religion.

I believe that the greatest possible future is open to the nation which will walk in the law of the Lord and in obedience to His precepts. Culture is not going to effect the great result which we desire ; mere physical development, and the arrest of disease, however valuable these may be, are not going to do it. Neither are the forces of the intellect, however disciplined, potent enough to regenerate the race, and reproduce the glow of perfect health. Men still, while they know what is right, do what is wrong, because they have not the strength of will to discipline the rebellious forces of appetite which should render their tributary service to human personality. We clergy are the ministers after all of that which is the most valuable ally to those efforts which you are making for the health of the body politic. We show people how the grace of God may come

to the rescue of the enfeebled will, and we point them to where the grace may be found.

We inculcate the great truth which our Redeemer taught us, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"¹

We show him that there are times when he must prefer death to life, danger to safety, and hardness to ease in the right exercise of a proper self-denial. We put before him that great truth which our own poet has so nobly described—

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for), but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear ;
And because right is right, to follow right ;
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

Fellow-labourers in the great cause of health, let us labour on, strong in hope, and confident in our methods, knowing our difficulties and yet refusing to be dismayed, as we raise our earnest supplication to Him, whose ways are ways of pleasantness and all whose paths are peace.²

"I have longed for Thy saving health, O Lord :
and in Thy law is my delight."³

¹ St. Mark viii. 36.

² Prov. iii. 17.

³ Ps. cxix. 174.

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

BX Newbolt, William Charles Edmund, 18
5133 The gospel message : sermons preach.
N37 Paul's Cathedral / by W.C.E. Newbolt.
G6 New York : Longmans, Green, 1907.
viii, 179p. ; 17cm.

11 sermons.

1. Church of England--Sermons. I. Ti

CCSC/mmb

A 27524

